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CECILIA,

OR

MEMOIR

OF AN

HEIRESS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF EVELINA.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

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CECILIA.

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

A LETTER.

AS ſoon as Mrs. Charlton was acquainted with the departure of young Delvile, ſhe returned to Cecilia, impatient to be informed what had paſſed. The narration ſhe heard both hurt and aſtoniſhed her; that Cecilia, the heireſs of ſuch a fortune, the poſſeſſor of ſo much beauty, deſcended of a worthy family, and formed and educated to grace a noble one, ſhould be rejected by people to whom her wealth would be moſt uſeful, and only in ſecret have their alliance propoſed to her, ſhe deemed an indignity that called for nothing but reſentment, and approved and enforced the reſolution of her young friend to reſiſt all ſolicitations which Mr. and Mrs. Delvile did not ſecond themſelves.

About two hours after Delvile was gone, his letter arrived. Cecilia opened it with trepidation, and read as follows:

To Miss Beverley.

September 20, 1779.

What could be the apprehenſions, the ſuſpicions of Miſs Beverley when ſo earneſtly ſhe prohibited my writing? From a temper ſo unguarded as mine, could ſhe fear any ſubtlety of doctrine? Is my character ſo little known to her, that ſhe can think me capable of craft or duplicity? Had I even the deſire, I have neither the addreſs nor the patience to practiſe them; no, lovelieſt Miſs Beverley, though ſometimes by vehemence I may incautiouſly offend, by ſophiſtry, believe me, I never ſhall injure: my ambition, as I have told you, is to convince, not beguile, and my arguments ſhall be ſimple as my profeſſions ſhall be ſincere.

Yet how again may I venture to mention a propoſal which ſo lately almoſt before you had heard you rejected? Suffer me, however, to aſſure you it reſulted neither from inſenſibility to your delicacy, nor to my own duty; I made it, on the contrary, with that reluctance and timidity which were given me by an apprehenſion that both ſeemed to be offended by it:—but alas! already I have ſaid what with grief I muſt repeat, I have no reſource, no al-

ternative, between receiving the honour of your hand in ſecret or foregoing you for ever.

You will wonder, you may well wonder at ſuch a declaration; and again that ſevere renunciation with which you wounded me, will tremble on your lips.—Oh, there let it ſtop! nor let the air again be agitated with ſounds ſo diſcordant!

In that cruel and heart-breaking moment when I tore myſelf from you at Delvile-Caſtle, I confeſſed to you the reaſon of my flight, and I determined to ſee you no more. I named not to you, then, my family, the potency of my own objections againſt daring to ſolicit your favour, rendering theirs immaterial: my own are now wholly removed, — but theirs remain in full force.

My father, deſcended of a race which though decaying in wealth, is unſubdued in pride, conſiders himſelf as the guardian of the honour of his houſe, to which he holds the name of his anceſtors inſeparably annexed: my mother, born of the ſame family, and bred to the ſame ideas, has ſtrengthened this opinion by giving it the ſanction of her own.

Such being their ſentiments, you will not, madam, be ſurpriſed that their only ſon, the ſole inheritor of their fortune, and ſole object of their expectations, ſhould early have admitted the ſame. Indeed almoſt the firſt leſſon I was taught was that of reverencing the family from which I am deſcended, and the

name to which I am born. I was bid conſider myſelf as its only remaining ſupport, and ſedulouſly inſtructed neither to act nor think but with a view to its aggrandizement and dignity.

Thus, unchecked by ourſelves, and uncontrolled by the world, this haughty ſelf-importance acquired by time a ſtrength, and by mutual encouragement, a firmneſs, which Miſs Beverley alone could poſſibly, I believe, have ſhaken! What, therefore, was my ſecret alarm, when firſt I was conſcious of the force of her attractions, and found my mind wholly occupied with admiration of her excellencies! All that pride could demand, and all to which ambition could aſpire, all that happineſs could covet, or the moſt ſcrupulous delicacy exact, in her I found united; and while my heart was enſlaved by her charms, my underſtanding exulted in its fetters.——Yet to forfeit my name, to give up for ever a family which upon me reſted its lateſt expectations,—— Honour, I thought, forbad it, propriety and manly ſpirit revolted at the ſacrifice. The renunciation of my birth-right ſeemed a deſertion of the poſt in which I was ſtationed: I forbore, therefore, even in my wiſhes, to ſolicit your favour, and vigorouſly determined to fly you as dangerous to my peace, becauſe unattainable without diſhonour.

Such was the intended regulation of my conduct at the time I received Biddulph's letter:

ter: in three days I was to leave England; my father, with much perſuaſion, had conſented to my departure; my mother, who penetrated into my motives, had never oppoſed it: but how great was the change wrought upon my mind by reading that letter! my ſteadineſs forſook me, my reſolution wavered; yet I thought him deceived, and attributed his ſuſpicions to jealouſy: but ſtill, Fidelle I knew was miſſing—and to hear he was your darling companion——was it poſſible to quit England in a ſtate of ſuch uncertainty? to be harraſſed in diſtant climates with conjectures I might then never ſatisfy? No; I told my friends I muſt viſit Biddulph before I left the kingdom, and promiſing to return to them in three or four days, I haſtily ſet out for Suffolk, and reſted not till I arrived at Mrs. Charlton's.

What a ſcene there awaited me! to behold the loved miſtreſs of my heart, the oppoſed, yet reſiſtleſs object of my fondeſt admiration, careſſing an animal ſhe knew to be mine, mourning over him his maſter's ill health, and ſweetly recommending to him fidelity.—— Ah! forgive the retroſpection, I will dwell on it no longer. Little, indeed, had I imagined with what ſoftneſs the dignity of Miſs Beverley was blended, though always conſcious that her virtues, her attractions, and her excellencies, would reflect luſtre upon the higheſt ſtation to which human grandeur could

raiſe her, and would ſtill be more exalted than her rank, though that were the moſt eminent upon earth. — And had there been a thouſand, and ten thouſand obſtacles to oppoſe my addreſſing her, vigorouſly and undauntedly would I have combated with them all, in preference to yielding to this ſingle objection.

Let not the frankneſs of this declaration irritate you, but rather let it ſerve to convince you of the ſincerity of what follows: various as are the calamities of life which may render me miſerable, YOU only, among even its choſen felicities, have power to make me happy. Fame, honours, wealth, ambition, were inſufficient without you; all chance of internal peace, and every ſofter hope is now centered in your favour, and to loſe you, from whatever cauſe, enſures me wretchedneſs unmitigated.

With reſpect therefore to myſelf, the die is finally caſt, and the conflict between boſom felicity and family pride is deliberately over. This name which ſo vainly I have cheriſhed and ſo painfully ſupported, I now find inadequate to recompenſe me for the ſacrifice which its preſervation requires. I part with it, I own, with regret that the ſurrender is neceſſary; yet it is rather an imaginary than an actual evil, and though a deep wound to pride, no offence to morality.

Thus

Thus have I laid open to you my whole heart, confeſſed my perplexities, acknowledged my vain-glory, and expoſed with equal ſincerity the ſources of my doubts, and the motives of my deciſion: but now, indeed, how to proceed I know not; the difficulties which are yet to encounter I fear to enumerate, and the petition I have to urge I have ſcarce courage to mention.

My family, miſtaking ambition for honour, and rank for dignity, have long planned a ſplendid connection for me, to which though my invariable repugnance has ſtopt any advances, their wiſhes and their views immovably adhere. I am but too certain they will now liſten to no other. I dread, therefore, to make a trial where I deſpair of ſucceſs; I know not how to riſk a prayer with thoſe who may ſilence me by a command.

In a ſituation ſo deſperate, what then remains? Muſt I make an application with a certainty of rejection, and then mock all authority by acting in defiance of it? Or, harder taſk yet! relinquiſh my deareſt hopes when no longer perſuaded of their impropriety? Ah! ſweeteſt Miſs Beverley, end the ſtruggle at once! My happineſs, my peace, are wholly in your power, for the moment of our union ſecures them for life.

It may ſeem to you ſtrange that I ſhould thus purpoſe to brave the friends whom I venture not to entreat; but from my knowledge

of their characters and ſentiments I am certain I have no other reſource. Their favourite principles were too early imbibed to be now at this late ſeaſon eradicated. Slaves that we all are to habits, and dupes to appearances, jealous guardians of our pride, to which our comfort is ſacrificed, and even our virtue made ſubſervient, what conviction can be offered by reaſon, to notions that exiſt but by prejudice? They have been cheriſhed too long for rhetoric to remove them, they can only be expelled by all-powerful neceſſity. Life is, indeed, too brief, and ſucceſs too precarious, to truſt, in any caſe where happineſs is concerned, the extirpation of deep-rooted and darling opinions, to the ſlow-working influence of argument and diſquiſition.

Yet bigotted as they are to rank and family, they adore Miſs Beverley, and though their conſent to the forfeiture of their name might for-ever be denied, when once they beheld her the head and ornament of their houſe, her elegance and accompliſhments joined to the ſplendour of her fortune, would ſpeedily make them forget the plans which now wholly abſorb them. Their ſenſe of honour is in nothing inferior to their ſenſe of high birth; your condeſcenſion, therefore, would be felt by them in its fulleſt force, and though, during their firſt ſurprize, they might be irritated againſt their ſon, they would make it the *ſtudy of* their lives, that the lady who for him had

had done ſo much, ſhould never, through their means, repine for herſelf.

With regard to ſettlements, the privacy of our union would not affect them: one confident we muſt unavoidably truſt, and I would depoſite in the hands of whatever perſon you would name, a bond by which I would engage myſelf to ſettle both your fortune and my own, according to the arbitration of our mutual friends.

The time for ſecrecy, though painful, would be ſhort, and even from the altar, if you deſired it, I would haſten to Delvile-Caſtle. Not one of my friends ſhould you ſee till they waited upon you themſelves to ſolicit your preſence at their houſe, till our reſidence elſewhere was fixed.

"Oh, lovelieſt Cecilia, from a dream of happineſs ſo ſweet awaken me not! from a plan of felicity ſo attractive turn not away! If one part of it is unpleaſant, reject not therefore all; and ſince without ſome drawback no earthly bliſs is attainable, do not, by a refinement too ſcrupulous for the ſhort period of our exiſtence, deny yourſelf that delight which your benevolence will afford you, in ſnatching from the pangs of unavailing regret and miſery, the gratefulleſt of men in the

humbleſt and moſt devoted
of your ſervants,
Mortimer Delvile.

Cecilia read and re-read this letter, but with a perturbation of mind that made her little able to weigh its contents. Paragraph by paragraph her ſentiments varied, and her determination was changed: the earneſtneſs of his ſupplication now ſoftened her into compliance, the acknowledged pride of his family now irritated her into reſentment, and the confeſſion of his own regret now ſickened her into deſpondence. She meant in an immediate anſwer to have written a final diſmiſſion; but though proof againſt his entreaties, becauſe not convinced by his arguments, there was ſomething in the concluſion of his letter that ſtaggered her reſolution.

Thoſe ſcruples and that refinement againſt which he warned her, ſhe herſelf thought might be overſtrained, and to gratify unneceſſary punctilio, the ſhort period of exiſtence be rendered cauſeleſsly unhappy. He had truly ſaid that their union would be no offence to morality; and with reſpect merely to pride, why ſhould that be ſpared? He knew he poſſeſſed her heart, ſhe had long been certain of his, her character had early gained the affection of his mother, and the eſſential ſervice which an income ſuch as her's muſt do the family, would ſoon be felt too powerfully to make her connection with it regretted.

Theſe reflections were ſo pleaſant ſhe knew not how to diſcard them; and the conſciouſneſs that her ſecret was betrayed not only to himſelf,

himſelf, but to Mr. Biddulph, Lord Ernolf, Lady Honoria Pemberton, and Mrs. Delvile, gave them additional force, by making it probable ſhe was yet more widely ſuſpected.

But ſtill her delicacy and her principles revolted againſt a conduct of which the ſecrecy ſeemed to imply the impropriety. "How ſhall I meet Mrs. Delvile," cried ſhe, "after an action ſo clandeſtine? How, after praiſe ſuch as ſhe has beſtowed upon me, bear the ſeverity of her eye, when ſhe thinks I have ſeduced from her the obedience of her ſon! A ſon who is the ſole ſolace and firſt hope of her exiſtence, whoſe virtues make all her happineſs, and whoſe filial piety is her only glory!—And well may ſhe glory in a ſon ſuch as Delvile! Nobly has he exerted himſelf in ſituations the moſt difficult, his family and his ideas of honour he has preferred to his peace and health, he has fulfilled with ſpirit and integrity the various, the conflicting duties of life. Even now, perhaps, in his preſent application, he may merely think himſelf bound by knowing me no longer free, and his generous ſenſibility to the weakneſs he has diſcovered, without any of the conviction to which he pretends, may have occaſioned this propoſal!"

A ſuggeſtion ſo mortifying again changed her determination; and the tears of Henrietta Belfield, with the letter which ſhe had ſurpriſed in her hand recurring to her memory, all

her

her thoughts turned once more upon rejecting him for ever.

In this fluctuating ſtate of mind ſhe found writing impracticable; while uncertain what to wiſh, to decide was impoſſible. She diſdained coquetry, ſhe was ſuperior to trifling, the candour and openneſs of Delvile had merited all her ſincerity, and therefore while any doubt remained with herſelf, ſhe held it unworthy her character to tell him ſhe had none.

Mrs. Charlton, upon reading the letter, became again the advocate of Delvile; the frankneſs with which he had ſtated his difficulties, aſſured her of his probity, and by explaining his former conduct, ſatisfied her with the rectitude of his future intentions. "Do not, therefore, my dear child," cried ſhe, "become the parent of your own miſery, by refuſing him; he deſerves you alike from his principles and his affection, and the taſk would both be long and melancholy to diſengage him from your heart. I ſee not, however, the leaſt occaſion for the diſgrace of a private marriage; I know not any family to which you would not be an honour, and thoſe who feel not your merit, are little worth pleaſing. Let Mr. Delvile, therefore, apply openly to his friends, and if they refuſe their conſent, be their prejudices their reward. You are freed from all obligations where caprice only can raiſe objections, and you may then,

then, in the face of the world, vindicate your choice."

The wiſhes of Cecilia accorded with this advice, though the general tenour of Delvile's letter gave her little reaſon to expect he would follow it.

CHAP. II.

A Discussion.

THE day paſt away, and Cecilia had yet written no anſwer; the evening came, and her reſolution was ſtill unfixed. Delvile, at length, was again announced; and though ſhe dreaded truſting herſelf to his entreaties, the neceſſity of haſtening ſome deciſion deterred her from refuſing to ſee him.

Mrs. Charlton was with her when he entered the room; he attempted at firſt ſome general converſation, though the anxiety of his mind was ſtrongly pictured upon his face. Cecilia endeavoured alſo to talk upon common topics, though her evident embarraſſment ſpoke the abſence of her thoughts.

Delvile at length, unable any longer to bear ſuſpence, turned to Mrs. Charlton, and

ſaid,

ſaid, "You are probably acquainted, madam, with the purport of the letter I had the honour of ſending to Miſs Beverley this morning?"

"Yes, Sir," anſwered the old lady, "and you need deſire little more than that her opinion of it may be as favourable as mine."

Delvile bowed and thanked her; and looking at Cecilia, to whom he ventured not to ſpeak, he perceived in her countenance a mixture of dejection and confuſion, that told him whatever might be her opinion, it had by no means encreaſed her happineſs.

"But why, Sir," ſaid Mrs. Charlton, "ſhould you be thus ſure of the diſapprobation of your friends? had you not better hear what they have to ſay?"

"I *know*, madam, what they have to ſay," returned he; "for their language and their principles have been invariable from my birth: to apply to them, therefore, for a conceſſion which I am certain they will not grant, were only a cruel device to lay all my miſery to their account."

"And if they are ſo perverſe, they deſerve from you nothing better," ſaid Mrs. Charlton; "ſpeak to them, however; you will then have done your duty; and if they are obſtinately unjuſt, you will have acquired a right to act for yourſelf."

"To mock their authority," anſwered Delvile, "would be more offenſive than to oppoſe

oppoſe it: to ſolicit their approbation, and then act in defiance of it, might juſtly provoke their indignation.—No; if at laſt I am reduced to appeal to them, by their deciſion I muſt abide."

To this Mrs. Charlton could make no anſwer, and in a few minutes ſhe left the room.

"And is ſuch, alſo," ſaid Delvile, "the opinion of Miſs Beverley? has ſhe doomed me to be wretched, and does ſhe wiſh that doom to be ſigned by my neareſt friends!"

"If your friends, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "are ſo undoubtedly inflexible, it were madneſs, upon any plan, to riſk their diſpleaſure."

"To entreaty," he anſwered, "they will be inflexible, but not to forgiveneſs. My father, though haughty, dearly, even paſſionately loves me; my mother, though high-ſpirited, is juſt, noble, and generous. She is, indeed, the moſt exalted of women, and her power over my mind I am unaccuſtomed to reſiſt. Miſs Beverly alone ſeems born to be her daughter—"

"No, no," interrupted Cecilia, "as her daughter ſhe rejects me!"

"She loves, ſhe adores you!" cried he, warmly; "and were I not certain ſhe feels your excellencies as they ought to be felt, my veneration for you *both* ſhould even yet ſpare you my preſent ſupplication. But you would become, I am certain, the firſt bleſſing

of

of her life; in you ſhe would behold all the felicity of her ſon,—his reſtoration to health, to his country, to his friends!"

"O Sir," cried Cecilia, with emotion, "how deep a trench of real miſery do you ſink, in order to raiſe this pile of fancied happineſs! But I will not be reſponſible for your offending ſuch a mother; ſcarcely can you honour her yourſelf more than I do; and I here declare moſt ſolemnly—"

"O ſtop!" interrupted Delvile, "and reſolve not till you have heard me. Would you, were ſhe no more, were my father alſo no more, would you yet perſiſt in refuſing me?"

"Why ſhould you aſk me?" ſaid Cecilia, bluſhing; "you would then be your own agent, and perhaps—"

She heſitated, and Delvile vehemently exclaimed, "Oh make me not a monſter! force me not to deſire the death of the very beings by whom I live! weaken not the bonds of affection by which they are endeared to me, and compel me not to wiſh them no more as the ſole barriers to my happineſs!"

"Heaven forbid!" cried Cecilia; could I believe you ſo impious, I ſhould ſuffer little indeed in deſiring your eternal abſence."

"Why then only upon their extinction muſt I reſt my hope of your favour?"

Cecilia,

Cecilia, ſtaggered and diſtreſſed by this queſtion, could make no anſwer. Delvile, perceiving her embarraſſment, redoubled his urgency; and before ſhe had power to recollect herſelf, ſhe had almoſt conſented to his plan, when Henrietta Belfield ruſhing in her memory, ſhe haſtily exclaimed, "One doubt there is, which I know not how to mention, but ought to have cleared up;—you are acquainted with—you remember Miſs Belfield?"

"Certainly; but what of Miſs Belfield that can raiſe a doubt in the mind of Miſs Beverley?"

Cecilia coloured, and was ſilent.

"Is it poſſible," continued he, "you could ever for an inſtant ſuppoſe—but I cannot even name a ſuppoſition ſo foreign to all poſſibility."

"She is ſurely very amiable?"

"Yes," anſwered he, "ſhe is innocent, gentle, and engaging; and I heartily wiſh ſhe were in a better ſituation."

"Did you ever occaſionally, or by any accident, correſpond with her?"

"Never in my life."

"And were not your viſits to the brother *ſometimes*——

"Have a care," interrupted he, laughing, "leſt I reverſe the queſtion, and aſk if your viſits to the ſiſter were not *ſometimes* for the brother! But what does this mean? Could

Miſs

Miſs Beverley imagine that *after* knowing her, the charms of Miſs Belfield could put me in any danger?"

Cecilia, bound in delicacy and friendſhip not to betray the tender and truſting Henrietta, and internally ſatisfied of his innocence by his frankneſs, evaded any anſwer, and would now have done with the ſubject; but Delvile, eager wholly to exculpate himſelf, though by no means diſpleaſed at an enquiry which ſhewed ſo much intereſt in his affections, continued his explanation.

"Miſs Belfield has, I grant, an attraction in the ſimplicity of her manners which charms by its ſingularity: her heart, too, ſeems all purity, and her temper all ſoftneſs. I have not, you find, been blind to her merit; on the contrary, I have both admired and pitied her. But far indeed is ſhe removed from all chance of rivalry in her heart! A character ſuch as hers for a while is irreſiſtably alluring; but when its novelty is over, ſimplicity uninformed becomes wearisome, and ſoftneſs without dignity is too indiſcriminate to give delight. We ſigh for entertainment, when cloyed by mere ſweetneſs; and heavily drags on the load of life when the companion of our ſocial hours wants ſpirit, intelligence, and cultivation. With Miſs Beverley all theſe—"

"Talk not of all theſe," cried Cecilia, "when one ſingle obſtacle has power to ren*der them valueleſs.*"

"But

"But now," cried he, "that obſtacle is ſurmounted."

"Surmounted only for a moment! for even in your Letter this morning you confeſs the regret with which it fills you."

"And why ſhould I deceive you? why pretend to think with pleaſure, or even with indifference, of an obſtacle which has had thus long the power to make me miſerable? But where is happineſs without allay? Is perfect bliſs the condition of humanity? Oh if we refuſe to taſte it till in its laſt ſtate of refinement, how ſhall the cup of evil be ever from our lips?"

"How indeed!" ſaid Cecilia, with a ſigh; "the regret, I believe, will remain eternally upon your mind, and ſhe, perhaps, who ſhould cauſe, might ſoon be taught to partake of it."

"O Miſs Beverley! how have I merited this ſeverity? did I make my propoſals lightly? Did I ſuffer my eagerneſs to conquer my reaſon? Have I not, on the contrary, been ſteady and conſiderate; neither biaſſed by paſſion nor betrayed by tenderneſs?"

"And yet in what," ſaid Cecilia, "conſiſts this boaſted ſteadineſs? I perceived it indeed, at Delvile Caſtle; but here—"

"The pride of heart which ſupported me there," cried he, "will ſupport me no longer; what ſuſtained my firmneſs, but your apparent ſeverity? What enabled me to

to fly you, but your invariable coldneſs? The rigour with which I trampled upon my feelings I thought fortitude and ſpirit,—but I knew not then the pitying ſympathy of Cecilia!"

"O that you knew it not yet!" cried ſhe, bluſhing; "before the fatal accident, you thought of me, I believe, in a manner far more honourable."

"Impoſſible! differently, I thought of you, but never better, never ſo well as now. I then repreſented you all lovely in beauty, all perfect in goodneſs and virtue, but it was virtue in its higheſt majeſty, not, as now, blended with the ſofteſt ſenſibility."

"Alas!" ſaid Cecilia, "how the portrait is faded!"

"No, it is but more from the life: it is the ſublimity of an angel, mingled with all that is attractive in woman. But who is the friend we may venture to truſt? To whom may I give bond? And from whom may I receive a treaſure which for the reſt of my life will conſtitute all its felicity?"

"Where can *I*," cried Cecilia, "find a friend, who, in this critical moment, will inſtruct me how to act!"

"You will find one," anſwered he, "in your own boſom: aſk but yourſelf this plain queſtion: will any virtue be offended by your honouring me with your hand?"

"Yes; duty will be offended, ſince it is *contrary to* the will of your parents."

"But

"But is there no time for emancipation? Am not I of an age to chooſe for myſelf the partner of my life? Will not you in a few days be the uncontrolled miſtreſs of your actions? Are we not both independent? Your ample fortune all your own, and the eſtates of my father ſo entailed, they muſt unavoidably be mine?"

"And are theſe," ſaid Cecilia, "conſiderations to ſet us free from our duty?"

"No, but they are circumſtances to relieve us from ſlavery. Let me not offend you if I am ſtill more explicit. When no law, human or divine, can be injured by our union, when one motive of pride is all that can be oppoſed to a thouſand motives of convenience and happineſs, why ſhould we *both* be made unhappy, merely leſt that pride ſhould loſe its gratification?"

This queſtion, which ſo often and ſo angrily ſhe had revolved in her own mind, again ſilenced her; and Delvile, with the eagerneſs of approaching ſucceſs, redoubled his ſolicitations.

"Be mine," he cried, "ſweeteſt Cecilia, and all will go well. To refer me to my friends is, effectually, to baniſh me for ever. Spare me, then, the unavailing taſk; and ſave me from the reſiſtleſs entreaties of a mother, whoſe every deſire I have held ſacred, whoſe wiſh has been my law, and whoſe commands I have

implicitly, invariably obeyed! Oh, generouſly ſave me from the dreadful alternative of wounding her maternal heart by a peremptory refuſal, or of torturing my own with pangs to which it is unequal by an extorted obedience!"

"Alas!" cried Cecilia, "how utterly impoſſible I can relieve you!"

"And why? once mine, irrevocably mine——"

"No, that would but irritate,—and irritate paſt hope of pardon."

"Indeed you are miſtaken: to your merit they are far from inſenſible, and your fortune is juſt what they wiſh. Truſt me, therefore, when I aſſure you that their diſpleaſure, which both reſpect and juſtice will guard them from ever ſhewing *you*, will ſoon die wholly away. I ſpeak not merely from my hopes; in judging my own friends, I conſider human nature in general. Inevitable evils are ever beſt ſupported. It is ſuſpenſe, it is hope that make the food of miſery: certainty is always endured, becauſe known to be paſt amendment, and felt to give defiance to ſtruggling."

"And can you," cried Cecilia, "with reaſoning ſo deſperate be ſatisfied?"

"In a ſituation ſo extraordinary as ours," anſwered he, "there is no other. The voice of the world at large will be all in our favour. Our union neither injures our fortunes, nor taints our morality: with the character of each the

the other is ſatisfied, and both muſt be alike exculpated from mercenary views of intereſt, or romantic contempt of poverty; what right have we, then, to repine at an objection which, however potent, is ſingle? Surely none. Oh if wholly unchecked were the happineſs I now have in view, if no foul ſtorm ſometimes lowered over the proſpect, and for a moment obſcured its brightneſs, how could my heart find room for joy ſo ſuperlative? The whole world might riſe againſt me, as the firſt man in it who had nothing left to wiſh!"

Cecilia, whoſe own hopes aided this reaſoning, found not much to oppoſe to it; and with little more of entreaty, and ſtill leſs of argument, Delvile at length obtained her conſent to his plan. Fearfully, indeed, and with unfeigned reluctance ſhe gave it, but it was the only alternative with a ſeparation for ever, to which ſhe held not the neceſſity adequate to the pain.

The thanks of Delvile were as vehement as had been his entreaties, which yet, however, were not at an end; the conceſſion ſhe had made was imperfect, unleſs its performance were immediate, and he now endeavoured to prevail with her to be his before the expiration of a week.

Here, however, his taſk ceaſed to be difficult; Cecilia, as ingenuous by nature as ſhe was honourable from principle, having once brought her mind to con-

ſent to his propoſal, ſought not by ſtudied difficulties to enhance the value of her compliance: the great point reſolved upon, ſhe held all elſe of too little importance for a conteſt.

Mrs. Charlton was now called in, and acquainted with the reſult of their conference. Her approbation by no means followed the ſcheme of privacy; yet ſhe was too much rejoiced in ſeeing her young friend near the period of her long ſuſpenſe and uneaſineſs, to oppoſe any plan which might forward their termination.

Delvile then again begged to know what male confident might be entruſted with their project.

Mr. Monckton immediately occurred to Cecilia, though the certainty of his ill-will to the cauſe made all application to him diſagreeable: but his long and ſteady friendſhip for her, his readineſs to counſel and aſſiſt her, and the promiſes ſhe had occaſionally made, not to act without his advice, all concurred to perſuade her that in a matter of ſuch importance, ſhe owed to him her confidence, and ſhould be culpable to proceed without it. Upon him, therefore, ſhe fixed; yet finding in herſelf a repugnance inſuperable to acquainting him with her ſituation, ſhe agreed that Delvile, who inſtantly propoſed to be her meſſenger, ſhould open to him the affair, and prepare him for their meeting.

Delvile then, rapid in thought and fertile in expedients, with a celerity and vigour which bore down all objections, arranged the whole conduct of the buſineſs. To avoid ſuſpicion, he determined inſtantly to quit her, and, as ſoon as he had executed his commiſſion with Mr. Monckton, to haſten to London, that the neceſſary preparations for their marriage might be made with diſpatch and ſecreſy. He purpoſed, alſo, to find out Mr. Belfield, that he might draw up the bond with which he meant to entruſt Mr. Monckton. This meaſure Cecilia would have oppoſed, but he refuſed to liſten to her. Mrs. Charlton herſelf, though her age and infirmities had long confined her to her own houſe, gratified Cecilia upon this critical occaſion with conſenting to accompany her to the altar. Mr. Monckton was depended upon for giving her away, and a church in London was the place appointed for the performance of the ceremony. In three days the principal difficulties to the union would be removed by Cecilia's coming of age, and in five days it was agreed they ſhould actually meet in town. The moment they were married, Delvile promiſed to ſet off for the Caſtle, while in another chaiſe, Cecilia returned to Mrs. Charlton's.

This ſettled, he conjured her to be punctual, and earneſtly recommending himſelf to her fidelity and affection, he bid her adieu.

CHAP. III.

A Retrospection.

LEFT now to herſelf, ſenſations unfelt before filled the heart of Cecilia. All that had paſſed for a while appeared a dream; her ideas were indiſtinct, her memory was confuſed, her faculties ſeemed all out of order, and ſhe had but an imperfect conſciouſneſs either of the tranſaction in which ſhe had juſt been engaged, or of the promiſe ſhe had bound herſelf to fulfil: even truth from imagination ſhe ſcarcely could ſeparate; all was darkneſs and doubt, inquietude and diſorder!

But when at length her recollection more clearly returned, and her ſituation appeared to her ſuch as it really was, diveſted alike of falſe terrors or deluſive expectations, ſhe found herſelf ſtill farther removed from tranquility.

Hitherto, though no ſtranger to ſorrow, which the ſickneſs and early loſs of her friends had firſt taught her to feel, and which the ſubſequent anxiety of her own heart had ſince inſtructed her to bear, ſhe had yet invariably poſſeſſed the conſolation of ſelf-approving reflections: but the ſtep ſhe was now about to take, all her principles oppoſed; it terrified her as undutiful, it ſhocked her as clandeſtine,

and ſcarce was Delvile out of ſight, before ſhe regretted her conſent to it as the loſs of her ſelf-eſteem, and believed, even if a reconciliation took place, the remembrance of a wilful fault would ſtill follow her, blemiſh in her own eyes the character ſhe had hoped to ſupport, and be a conſtant allay to her happineſs, by telling her how unworthily ſhe had obtained it.

Where frailty has never been voluntary, nor error ſtubborn, where the pride of early integrity is unſubdued, and the firſt purity of innocence is inviolate, how fearfully delicate, how "tremblingly alive" is the conſcience of man! ſtrange, that what in its firſt ſtate is ſo tender, can in its laſt become ſo callous!

Compared with the general lot of human miſery, Cecilia had ſuffered nothing; but compared with the exaltation of ideal happineſs, ſhe had ſuffered much; willingly, however, would ſhe again have borne all that had diſtreſſed her, experienced the ſame painful ſuſpenſe, endured the ſame melancholy parting, and gone through the ſame cruel taſk of combating inclination with reaſon, to have relieved her virtuous mind from the new-born and intolerable terror of conſcientious reproaches.

The equity of her notions permitted her not from the earneſtneſs of Delvile's entreaties to draw any palliation for her conſent to his propoſal; ſhe was conſcious that but for her own

too greatly facility thoſe entreaties would have been ineffectual, ſince ſhe well knew how little from any other of her admirers they would have availed.

But chiefly her affliction and repentance hung upon Mrs. Delvile, whom ſhe loved, reverenced and honoured, whom ſhe dreaded to offend, and whom ſhe well knew expected from her even exemplary virtue. Her praiſes, her partiality, her confidence in her character, which hitherto had been her pride, ſhe now only recollected with ſhame and with ſadneſs. The terror of the firſt interview never ceaſed to be preſent to her; ſhe ſhrunk even in imagination from her wrath-darting eye, ſhe felt ſtung by pointed ſatire, and ſubdued by cold contempt.

Yet to diſappoint Delvile ſo late, by forfeiting a promiſe ſo poſitively accorded; to trifle with a man who to her had been uniformly candid, to waver when her word was engaged, and retract when he thought himſelf ſecure,—honour, juſtice and ſhame told her the time was now paſt.

"And yet is not this," cried ſhe, "placing nominal before actual evil? Is it not ſtudying appearance at the expence of reality? If agreeing to wrong is criminal, is not performing it worſe? If repentance for ill actions calls for mercy, has not repentance for ill intentions a yet higher claim?—And what reproaches from Delvile can be ſo bitter as my own?—

What

What ſeparation, what ſorrow, what poſſible calamity can hang upon my mind with ſuch heavineſs, as the ſenſe of committing voluntary evil?"

This thought ſo much affected her, that, conquering all regret either for Delvile or herſelf, ſhe reſolved to write to him inſtantly, and acquaint him of the alteration in her ſentiments.

This, however, after having ſo deeply engaged herſelf, was by no means eaſy; and many letters were begun, but not one of them was finiſhed, when a ſudden recollection obliged her to give over the attempt,—for ſhe knew not whither to direct to him.

In the haſte with which their plan had been formed and ſettled, it had never once occurred to them that any occaſion for writing was likely to happen. Delvile, indeed, knew that her addreſs would ſtill be the ſame; and with regard to his own, as his journey to London was to be ſecret, he purpoſed not having any fixed habitation. On the day of their marriage, and not before, they had appointed to meet at the houſe of Mrs. Roberts, in Fetter-lane, whence they were inſtantly to proceed to the church.

She might ſtill, indeed, encloſe a letter for him in one to Mrs. Hill, to be delivered to him on the deſtined morning when he called to claim her; but to fail him at the laſt moment, when Mr. Belfield would have drawn

up the bond, when a licence was procured, the clergyman waiting to perform the ceremony, and Delvile without a ſuſpicion but that the next moment would unite them for ever, ſeemed extending prudence into treachery, and power into tyranny. Delvile had done nothing to merit ſuch treatment, he had practiſed no deceit, he had been guilty of no perfidy, he had opened to her his whole heart, and after ſhewing it without any diſguiſe, the option had been all her own to accept or refuſe him.

A ray of joy now broke its way through the gloom of her apprehenſions. "Ah!" cried ſhe, "I have not, then, any means to recede! an unprovoked breach of promiſe, at the very moment deſtined for its performance, would but vary the mode of acting wrong, without approaching nearer to acting right!"

This idea for a while not merely calmed but delighted her; to be the wife of Delvile ſeemed now a matter of neceſſity, and ſhe ſoothed herſelf with believing that to ſtruggle againſt it were vain.

The next morning during breakfaſt Mr. Monckton arrived.

Not greater, though winged with joy, had been the expedition of Delvile to open to him his plan, than was his own, though only goaded by deſperation, to make ſome effort with Cecilia for rendering it abortive. Nor could all his ſelf-denial, the command which he

he held over his paſſions, nor the rigour with which his feelings were made ſubſervient to his intereſt, in this ſudden hour of trial, avail to preſerve his equanimity. The refinements of hypocriſy, and the arts of inſinuation, offered advantages too diſtant, and exacted attentions too ſubtle, for a moment ſo alarming; thoſe arts and thoſe attentions he had already for many years practiſed, with an addreſs the moſt maſterly, and a diligence the moſt indefatigable: ſucceſs had of late ſeemed to follow his toils; the encreaſing infirmities of his wife, the diſappointment and retirement of Cecilia, uniting to promiſe him a concluſion equally ſpeedy and happy; when now, by a ſudden and unexpected ſtroke, the ſweet ſolace of his future cares, the long projected recompence of his paſt ſufferings, was to be ſnatched from him for-ever, and by one who, compared with himſelf, was but the acquaintance of a day.

Almoſt wholly off his guard from the ſurpriſe and horror of this apprehenſion, he entered the room with ſuch an air of haſte and perturbation, that Mrs. Charlton and her grand-daughters demanded what was the matter.

"I am come," he anſwered abruptly, yet endeavouring to recollect himſelf, "to ſpeak with Miſs Beverley upon buſineſs of ſome importance."

"My dear, then," ſaid Mrs. Charlton, "you had better go with Mr. Monckton into your dreſſing-room."

Cecilia, deeply bluſhing, aroſe and led the way: ſlowly, however, ſhe proceeded, though urged by Mr. Monckton, to make ſpeed. Certain of his diſapprobation, and but doubtfully relieved from her own, ſhe dreaded a conference which on his ſide, ſhe foreſaw, would be all exhortation and reproof, and on hers all timidity and ſhame.

"Good God," cried he, "Miſs Beverley, what is this you have done? bound yourſelf to marry a man who deſpiſes, who ſcorns, who refuſes to own you!"

Shocked by this opening, ſhe ſtarted, but could make no anſwer.

"See you not," he continued, "the indignity which is offered you? Does the looſe, the flimſy veil with which it is covered, hide it from your underſtanding, or diſguiſe it from your delicacy?"

"I thought not,—I meant not," ſaid ſhe, more and more confounded, "to ſubmit to any indignity, though my pride, in an exigence ſo peculiar, may give way, for a while, to convenience."

"To convenience?" repeated he, "to contempt, to deriſion, to inſolence!"—

"O Mr. Monckton!" interrupted Cecilia, "make not uſe of ſuch expreſſions! they are too cruel for me to hear, and if I thought they

they were juſt, would make me miſerable for life!"

"You are deceived, groſsly deceived," replied he, "if you doubt their truth for a moment: they are not, indeed, even decently concealed from you; they are glaring as the day, and wilful blindneſs can alone obſcure them."

"I am ſorry, Sir, ſaid Cecilia, whoſe confuſion, at a charge ſo rough, began now to give way to anger, "if this is your opinion; and I am ſorry, too, for the liberty I have taken in troubling you upon ſuch a ſubject."

An apology ſo full of diſpleaſure inſtantly taught Mr. Monckton the error he was committing, and checking, therefore, the violence of thoſe emotions to which his ſudden and deſperate diſappointment gave riſe, and which betrayed him into reproaches ſo unſkilful, he endeavoured to recover his accuſtomed equanimity, and aſſuming an air of friendly openneſs, ſaid, "Let me not offend you, my dear Miſs Beverley, by a freedom which reſults merely from a ſolicitude to ſerve you, and which the length and intimacy of our acquaintance had, I hoped, long ſince authoriſed. I know not how to ſee you on the brink of deſtruction without ſpeaking, yet, if you are averſe to my ſincerity, I will curb it, and have done."

"No, do not have done," cried ſhe, much ſoftened; "your ſincerity does me nothing

but honour, and hitherto, I am ſure, it has done me nothing but good. Perhaps I deſerve your utmoſt cenſure; I feared it, indeed, before you came, and ought, therefore, to have better prepared myſelf for meeting with it."

This ſpeech completed Mr. Monckton's ſelf-victory; it ſhewed him not only the impropriety of his turbulence, but gave him room to hope that a mildneſs more crafty would have better ſucceſs.

"You cannot but be certain," he anſwered, "that my zeal proceeds wholly from a deſire to be of uſe to you: my knowledge of the world might poſſibly, I thought, aſſiſt your inexperience, and the diſintereſtneſs of my regard, might enable me to ſee and to point out the dangers to which you are expoſed, from artifice and duplicity in thoſe who have other purpoſes to anſwer than what ſimply belong to your welfare."

"Neither artifice nor duplicity," cried Cecilia, jealous for the honour of Delvile, "have been practiſed againſt me. Argument, and not perſuaſion, determined me, and if I have done wrong—thoſe who prompted me have erred as unwittingly as myſelf."

"You are too generous to perceive the difference, or you would find nothing leſs alike. If, however, my plainneſs will not offend you, before it is quite too late, I will point out to you a few of the evils,—for there are ſome

ſome I cannot even mention, which at this inſtant do not merely threaten, but await you."

Cecilia ſtarted at this terrifying offer, and afraid to accept, yet aſhamed to refuſe it, hung back irreſolute.

"I ſee," ſaid Mr. Monckton, after a pauſe of ſome continuance, "your determination admits no appeal. The conſequence muſt, indeed, be all your own, but I am greatly grieved to find how little you are aware of its ſeriouſneſs. Hereafter you will wiſh, perhaps, that the friend of your earlieſt youth had been permitted to adviſe you; at preſent you only think him officious and impertinent, and therefore he can do nothing you will be ſo likely to approve as quitting you. I wiſh you, then, greater happineſs than ſeems prepared to follow you, and a counſellor more proſperous in offering his aſſiſtance."

He would then have taken his leave: but Cecilia called out, "Oh, Mr. Monckton! do you then give me up?"

"Not unleſs you wiſh it."

"Alas, I know not what to wiſh! except, indeed, the reſtoration of that ſecurity from ſelf-blame, which till yeſterday, even in the midſt of diſappointment, quieted and conſoled me."

"Are you, then, ſenſible you have gone wrong, yet reſolute not to turn back?"

"Could I tell; could I ſee," cried ſhe, with energy, "which way I *ought* to turn, not

a moment

a moment would I heſitate how to act! my heart ſhould have no power, my happineſs no choice,—I would recover my own eſteem by any ſacrifice that could be made!"

"What, then, can poſſibly be your doubt? To be as you were yeſterday what is wanting but your own inclination?"

"Every thing is wanting; right, honour, firmneſs, all by which the juſt are bound, and all which the conſcientious hold ſacred!"

"Theſe ſcruples are merely romantic; your own good ſenſe, had it fairer play, would contemn them; but it is warped at preſent by prejudice and prepoſſeſſion."

"No, indeed!" cried ſhe, colouring at the charge, "I may have entered too precipitately into an engagement I ought to have avoided, but it is weakneſs of judgment, not of heart, that diſables me from retrieving my error."

"Yet you will neither hear whither it may lead you, nor which way you may eſcape from it?"

"Yes, Sir," cried ſhe, trembling, "I am now ready to hear both."

"Briefly, then, I will tell you. It will lead you into a family of which every individual will diſdain you; it will make you inmate of an houſe of which no other inmate will aſſociate with you; you will be inſulted as an inferior, and reproached as an intruder; your birth will be a ſubject of ridicule, and your whole race only named with deriſion: and

and while the elders of the proud caſtle treat you with open contempt, the man for whom you ſuffer will not dare to ſupport you."

"Impoſſible! impoſſible!" cried Cecilia, with the moſt angry emotion, "this whole repreſentation is exaggerated, and the latter part is utterly without foundation."

"The latter part," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "is of all other leaſt diſputable: the man who now dares not own, will then never venture to defend you. On the contrary, to make peace for himſelf, he will be the firſt to neglect you. The ruined eſtates of his anceſtors will be repaired by your fortune, while the name which you carry into his family will be conſtantly reſented as an injury: you will thus be plundered though you are ſcorned, and told to conſider yourſelf honoured that they condeſcend to make uſe of you! nor here reſts the evil of a forced connection with ſo much arrogance,—even your children, ſhould you have any, will be educated to deſpiſe you!

"Dreadful and horrible!" cried Cecilia; "I can hear no more.—Oh, Mr. Monckton, what a proſpect have you opened to my view!"

"Fly from it, then, while it is yet in your power,—when two paths are before you, chooſe not that which leads to deſtruction; ſend inſtantly after Delvile and tell him that you have recovered your ſenſes."

"I would

"I would long ſince have ſent,—I wanted not a repreſentation ſuch as this,—but I know not how to direct to him, nor whither he is gone."

"All art and baſeneſs to prevent your recantation!"

"No, Sir, no," cried ſhe with quickneſs; "whatever may be the truth of your painting in general, all that concerns——"

Aſhamed of the vindication ſhe intended, which yet in her own mind was firm and animated, ſhe ſtopt and left the ſentence unfiniſhed.

"In what place were you to meet?" ſaid Mr. Monckton; "you can at leaſt ſend to him there."

"We were only to have met," anſwered ſhe, in much confuſion, "at the laſt moment,—and that would be too late—it would be too—I could not, without ſome previous notice, break a promiſe which I gave without any reſtriction."

"Is this your only objection?"

"It is: but it is one which I cannot conquer."

"Then you would give up this ill-boding connection, but from notions of delicacy with regard to the time?"

"Indeed I meant it, before you came."

"I, then, will obviate this objection: give me but the commiſſion, either verbally or in writing,

writing, and I will undertake to find him out, and deliver it before night."

Cecilia, little expecting this offer, turned extremely pale, and after pauſing ſome moments, ſaid in a faultering voice, "What, then, Sir, is your advice, in what manner—"

"I will ſay to him all that is neceſſary; truſt the matter with me."

"No,—he deſerves, at leaſt, an apology from myſelf—though how to make it—"

She ſtopt, ſhe heſitated, ſhe went out of the room for pen and ink, ſhe returned without them, and the agitation of her mind every inſtant encreaſing, ſhe begged him, in a faint voice, to excuſe her while ſhe conſulted with Mrs. Charlton, and promiſing to wait upon him again, was hurrying away.

Mr. Monckton, however, ſaw too great danger in ſo much emotion to truſt her out of his ſight: he told her, therefore, that ſhe would only encreaſe her perplexity, without reaping any advantage, by an application to Mrs. Charlton; that if ſhe was really ſincere in wiſhing to recede, there was not a moment to be loſt, and Delvile ſhould immediately be purſued.

Cecilia, ſenſible of the truth of this ſpeech, and once more recollecting the unaffected earneſtneſs with which, but an hour or two before, ſhe had herſelf deſired to renounce this engagement, now ſummoned her utmoſt courage to her aid, and, after a ſhort, but painful

painful ſtruggle, determined to act conſiſtently with her profeſſions and her character, and, by one great and final effort, to conclude all her doubts, and try to ſilence even her regret, by completing the triumph of fortitude over inclination.

She called, therefore, for pen and ink, and without venturing herſelf from the room, wrote the following letter.

To Mortimer Delvile, Eſq.

Accuſe me not of caprice, and pardon my irreſolution, when you find me ſhrinking with terror from the promiſe I have made, and no longer either able or willing to perform it. The reproaches of your family I ſhould very ill endure; but the reproaches of my own heart for an action I can neither approve nor defend, would be ſtill more oppreſſive. With ſuch a weight upon the mind, length of life would be burthenſome; with a ſenſation of guilt early death would be terrific! Theſe being my notions of the engagement into which we have entered, you cannot wonder, and you have ſtill leſs reaſon to repine, that I dare not fulfil it. Alas! where would be your chance of happineſs with one who in the very act of becoming yours would forfeit her own!

I bluſh at this tardy recantation, and I grieve at the diſappointment it may occaſion

ſion you: but I have yielded to the exhortations of an inward monitor, who is never to be neglected with impunity. Conſult him yourſelf; and I ſhall need no other advocate.

Adieu, and may all felicity attend you! If to hear of the almoſt total privation of mine, will mitigate the reſentment with which you will probably read this letter, it may be mitigated but too eaſily! Yet my conſent to a clandeſtine action ſhall never be repeated; and though I confeſs to you I am not happy, I ſolemnly declare my reſolution is unalterable. A little reflection will tell you I am right, though a great deal of lenity may ſcarce ſuffice to make you pardon my being right no ſooner.

C. B.

This letter, which with trembling haſte, reſulting from a fear of her own ſteadineſs, ſhe folded and ſealed, Mr. Monckton, from the ſame apprehenſion, yet more eagerly received, and ſcarce waiting to bid her good morning, mounted his horſe, and purſued his way to London.

Cecilia returned to Mrs. Charlton to acquaint her with what had paſſed: and notwithſtanding the ſorrow ſhe felt in apparently injuring the man whom, in the whole world, ſhe moſt wiſhed to oblige, ſhe yet found a ſatisfaction in the ſacrifice ſhe had made, that

that recompenſed her for much of her ſufferings, and ſoothed her into ſomething like tranquillity; the true power of virtue ſhe had ſcarce experienced before, for ſhe found it a reſource againſt the crueleſt dejection, and a ſupporter in the bittereſt diſappointment.

CHAP. IV.

An Embarrassment.

THE day paſſed on without any intelligence; the next day, alſo, paſſed in the ſame manner, and on the third, which was her birth-day, Cecilia became of age.

The preparations which had long been making among her tenants to celebrate this event, Cecilia appeared to take ſome ſhare, and endeavoured to find ſome pleaſure in. She gave a public dinner to all who were willing to partake of it, ſhe promiſed redreſs to thoſe who complained of hard uſage, ſhe pardoned many debts, and diſtributed money, food, and cloathing to the poor. Theſe benevolent occupations made time ſeem leſs heavy, and while they freed her from ſolitude, diverted her ſuſpence. She ſtill, however, continued at the houſe of Mrs. Charlton, the workmen

workmen having diſappointed her in finiſhing her own.

But, in defiance of her utmoſt exertion, towards the evening of this day the uneaſineſs of her uncertainty grew almoſt intolerable. The next morning ſhe had promiſed Delvile to ſet out for London, and he expected the morning after to claim her for his wife; yet Mr. Monckton neither ſent nor came, and ſhe knew not if her letter was delivered, or if ſtill he was unprepared for the diſappointment by which he was awaited. A ſecret regret for the unhappineſs ſhe muſt occaſion him, which ſilently yet powerfully reproached her, ſtole faſt upon her mind, and poiſoned its tranquillity; for though her opinion was invariable in holding his propoſal to be wrong, ſhe thought too highly of his character to believe he would have made it but from a miſtaken notion it was right. She painted him, therefore, to herſelf, as glowing with indignation, accuſing her of inconſiſtency, and perhaps ſuſpecting her of coquetry, and imputing her change of conduct to motives the moſt trifling and narrow, till with reſentment and diſdain, he drove her wholly from his thoughts.

In a few minutes, however, the picture was reverſed; Delvile no more appeared ſtorming nor unreaſonable; his face wore an aſpect of ſorrow, and his brow was clouded with diſappointment: he forbore to reproach her,

ber, but the look which her imagination delineated was more piercing than words of ſevereſt import.

Theſe images purſued and tormented her, drew tears from her eyes, and loaded her heart with anguiſh. Yet, when ſhe recollected that her conduct had had in view an higher motive than pleaſing Delvile, ſhe felt that it ought to offer her an higher ſatisfaction: ſhe tried, therefore, to revive her ſpirits, by reflecting upon her integrity, and refuſed all indulgence to this enervating ſadneſs, beyond what the weakneſs of human nature demands, as ſome relief to its ſufferings upon every freſh attack of miſery.

A conduct ſuch as this was the beſt antidote againſt affliction, whoſe arrows are never with ſo little difficulty repelled, as when they light upon a conſcience which no ſelf-reproach has laid bare to their malignancy.

Before ſix o'clock the next morning, her maid came to her bedſide with the following letter, which ſhe told her had been brought by an expreſs.

To Miss Beverley.

May this letter, with one only from Delvile-Caſtle, be the laſt that *Miſs Beverley* may ever receive.

Yet ſweet to me as is that hope, I write in the utmoſt uneaſineſs; I have juſt heard that

that a gentleman, whom, by the deſcription that is given of him, I imagine is Mr. Monckton, has been in ſearch of me with a letter which he was anxious to deliver immediately.

Perhaps this letter is from Miſs Beverley, perhaps it contains directions which ought inſtantly to be followed: could I divine what they are, with what eagerneſs would I ſtudy to anticipate their execution! It will not, I hope, be too late to receive them on Saturday, when her power over my actions will be confirmed, and when every wiſh ſhe will communicate, ſhall be gratefully, joyfully, and with delight fulfilled.

I have ſought Belfield in vain; he has left Lord Vannelt, and no one knows whither he is gone. I have been obliged, therefore, to truſt a ſtranger to draw up the bond; but he is a man of good character, and the time of ſecreſy will be too ſhort to put his diſcretion in much danger. To-morrow, Friday, I ſhall ſpend ſolely in endeavouring to diſcover Mr. Monckton; I have leiſure ſufficient for the ſearch, ſince ſo proſperous has been my diligence, that *every thing is prepared!*

I have ſeen ſome lodgings in Pall-Mall, which I think are commodious and will ſuit you: ſend a ſervant, therefore, before you to ſecure them. If upon your arrival I ſhould venture to meet you there, be not, I beſeech you, offended or alarmed; I ſhall take every poſſible

poſſible precaution neither to be known nor ſeen, and I will ſtay with you only three minutes. The meſſenger who carries this is ignorant from whom it comes, for I fear his repeating my name among your ſervants, and he could ſcarce return to me with an anſwer before you will yourſelf be in town. Yes, loveliеſt Cecilia! at the very moment you receive this letter, the chaiſe will, I flatter myſelf, be at the door, which is to bring to me a treaſure that will enrich every future hour of my life! And oh, as to me it will be exhauſtleſs, may but its ſweet diſpenſer experience ſome ſhare of the happineſs ſhe beſtows, and then what, ſave her own purity, will be ſo perfect, ſo unſullied, as the felicity of her

M. D?

The perturbation of Cecilia upon reading this letter was unſpeakable: Mr. Monckton, ſhe found, had been wholly unſucceſsful, all her heroiſm had anſwered no purpoſe, and the tranſaction was as backward as before ſhe had exerted it.

She was now, therefore, called upon to think and act entirely for herſelf. Her opinion was ſtill the ſame, nor did her reſolution waver, yet how to put it in execution ſhe could not diſcern.

To write to him was impoſſible, ſince ſhe was ignorant where he was to be found; to diſappoint

diſappoint him at the laſt moment ſhe could not reſolve, ſince ſuch a conduct appeared to her unfeeling and unjuſtifiable: for a few inſtants ſhe thought of having him waited for at night in London, with a letter; but the danger of entruſting any one with ſuch a commiſſion, and the uncertainty of finding him, ſhould he diſguiſe himſelf, made the ſucceſs of this ſcheme too precarious for trial.

One expedient alone occurred to her, which, though ſhe felt to be hazardous, ſhe believed was without an alternative: this was no other than haſtening to London herſelf, conſenting to the interview he had propoſed in Pall-Mall, and then, by ſtrongly ſtating her objections, and confeſſing the grief they occaſioned her, to pique at once his generoſity and his pride upon releaſing her himſelf from the engagement into which he had entered.

She had no time to deliberate; her plan, therefore, was decided almoſt as ſoon as formed, and every moment being precious, ſhe was obliged to awaken Mrs. Charlton, and communicate to her at once the letter from Delvile, and the new reſolution ſhe had taken.

Mrs. Charlton, having no object in view but the happineſs of her young friend, with a facility that looked not for objections, and ſcarce ſaw them when preſented, agreed to the expedition, and kindly conſented to accompany her to London; for Cecilia, however concerned to hurry and fatigue her, was too

anxious for the ſanction of her preſence to heſitate in ſoliciting it.

A chaiſe, therefore, was ordered; and with poſt-horſes for ſpeed, and two ſervants on horſeback, the moment Mrs. Charlton was ready, they ſet out on their journey.

Scarce had they proceeded two miles on their way, when they were met by Mr. Monckton, who was haſtening to their houſe.

Amazed and alarmed at a ſight ſo unexpected, he ſtopt the chaiſe to enquire whither they were going.

Cecilia, without, anſwering, aſked if her lettter had yet been received?

"I could not," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "deliver it to a man who was not to be found: I was this moment coming to acquaint you how vainly I had ſought him; but ſtill that your journey is unneceſſary, unleſs voluntary, ſince I have left it at the houſe where you told me you ſhould meet to-morrow morning, and where he muſt then unavoidably receive it."

"Indeed," Sir," cried Cecilia, "to-morrow morning will be too late,—in conſcience, in juſtice, and even in decency too late! I *muſt*, therefore, go to town; yet I go not, believe me, in oppoſition to your injunctions, but to enable myſelf, without treachery or diſhonour, to fulfil them."

Mr. Monckton, aghaſt and confounded, made not any anſwer, till Cecilia gave orders to the poſtilion to drive on: he then haſtily called

called to ſtop him, and began the warmeſt expoſtulation; but Cecilia, firm when ſhe believed herſelf right, though wavering when fearful ſhe was wrong, told him it was now too late to change her plan, and repeating her orders to the poſtilion, left him to his own reflections; grieved herſelf to reject his counſel, yet too intently occupied by her own affairs and deſigns, to think long of any other.

CHAP. V.

A TORMENT.

AT ——— they ſtopt for dinner; Mrs. Charlton being too much fatigued to go on without ſome reſt, though the haſte o Cecilia to meet Delvile time enough for newf arranging their affairs, made her regret every moment that was ſpent upon the road.

Their meal was not long, and they were returning to their chaiſe, when they were ſuddenly encountered by Mr. Morrice, who was juſt alighted from his horſe.

He congratulated himſelf upon the happineſs of meeting them with the air of a man who nothing doubted that happineſs being mutual; then haſtening to ſpeak of the Grove,

"I could hardly," he cried, "get away; my friend Monckton won't know what to do without me, for Lady Margaret, poor old ſoul, is in a ſhocking bad way indeed; there's hardly any ſtaying in the room with her; her breathing is juſt like the grunting of a hog. She can't poſſibly laſt long, for ſhe's quite upon her laſt legs, and tumbles about ſo when ſhe walks alone, one would ſwear ſhe was drunk."

"If you take infirmity," ſaid Mrs. Charlton, who was now helped into the chaiſe, "for intoxication, you muſt ſuppoſe no old perſon ſober."

"Vaſtly well ſaid, ma'am," cried he; "I really forgot your being an old lady yourſelf, or I ſhould not have made the obſervation. However, as to poor Lady Margaret, ſhe may do as well as ever by and by, for ſhe has an excellent conſtitution, and I ſuppoſe ſhe has been hardly any better than ſhe is now theſe forty years, for I remember when I was quite a boy hearing her called a limping old puddle."

"Well, we'll diſcuſs this matter, if you pleaſe," ſaid Cecilia, "ſome other time," and ordered the poſtilion to drive on. But before they came to their next ſtage, Morrice having changed his horſe, joined them, and rode on by their ſide, begging them to obſerve what haſte he had made on purpoſe to have the pleaſure of eſcorting them.

This

This forwardneſs was very offenſive to Mrs. Charlton, whoſe years and character had long procured her more deference and reſpect: but Cecilia, anxious only to haſten her journey, was indifferent to every thing, ſave what retarded it.

At the ſame inn they both again changed horſes, and he ſtill continued riding with them, and occaſionally talking, till they were within twenty miles of London, when a diſturbance upon the road exciting his curioſity, he haſtily rode away from them to enquire into its cauſe.

Upon coming up to the place whence it proceeded, they ſaw a party of gentlemen on horſeback ſurrounding a chaiſe which had been juſt overturned; and while the confuſion in the road obliged the poſtilion to ſtop, Cecilia heard a lady's voice exclaiming, "I declare I dare ſay I am killed!" and inſtantly recollecting Miſs Larolles, the fear of diſcovery and delay made her deſire the man to drive on with all ſpeed. He was preparing to obey her, but Morrice, galloping after them, called out, "Miſs Beverley, one of the ladies that has been overturned, is an acquaintance of yours. I uſed to ſee her with you at Mrs. Harrel's."

"Did you?" ſaid Cecilia, much diſconcerted, "I hope ſhe is not hurt?"

"No, not at all; but the lady with her is bruiſed to death; won't you come and ſee her?"

"I am too much in haſte at preſent,—and I can do them no good; but Mrs. Charlton I am ſure will ſpare her ſervant, if he can be of any uſe."

"O, but the young lady wants to ſpeak to you; ſhe is coming up to the chaiſe as faſt as ever ſhe can."

"And how ſhould ſhe know me?" cried Cecilia, with much ſurpriſe; "I am ſure ſhe could not ſee me."

"O, I told her," anſwered Morrice, with a nod of ſelf-approbation for what he had done, "I told her it was you, for I knew I could ſoon overtake you."

Diſpleaſure at this officiouſneſs was unavailing, for looking out of the window, ſhe perceived Miſs Larolles, followed by half her party, not three paces from the chaiſe.

"O my dear creature," ſhe called out, "what a terrible accident! I aſſure you I am ſo monſtrouſly frightened you've no idea. It's the luckieſt thing in the world that you were going this way. Never any thing happened ſo exceſſively provoking; you've no notion what a fall we've had. It's horrid ſhocking, I aſſure you. How have you been all this time? You can't conceive how glad I am to ſee you."

"And to which will Miſs Beverley anſwer firſt," cried a voice which announced Mr. Goſport, "the joy or the ſorrow? For ſo adroitly are they blended, that a common auditor

ditor could with difficulty decide whether condolence or congratulation ſhould have the precedency."

"How can you be ſo exceſſive horrid," cried Miſs Larolles, "to talk of congratulation, when one's in ſuch a ſhocking panic, that one does not know if one's dead or alive!"

"Dead, then, for any wager," returned he, "if we may judge from your ſtillneſs."

"I deſire, now, you won't begin joking," cried ſhe, "for I aſſure you its an exceſſive ſerious affair. I was never ſo rejoiced in my life as when I found I was not killed. I've been ſo ſqueezed you've no notion. I thought for a full hour I had broke both my arms."

"And my heart at the ſame time," ſaid Mr. Goſport; "I hope you did not imagine that the leaſt fragile of the three?"

"All our hearts, give me leave to add," ſaid Captain Areſby—juſt then advancing, "all our hearts muſt have been *abimés*, by the indiſpoſition of Miſs Larolles, had not their doom been fortunately revoked by the ſight of Miſs Beverley."

"Well, this is exceſſive odd," cried Miſs Larolles, "that every body ſhould run away ſo from poor Mrs. Mears; ſhe'll be ſo affronted you've no idea. I thought, Captain Areſby, you would have ſtayed to take care of her."

"I'll run and ſee how ſhe is myſelf," cried Morrice, and away he galloped.

"Really, ma'am," ſaid the Captain, "I am quite *au deſeſpoir* to have failed in any of my devoirs; but I make it a principle to be a mere looker-on upon theſe occaſions, leſt I ſhould be ſo unhappy as to commit any *faux pas* by too much *empreſſement*."

"An admirable caution!" ſaid Mr. Goſport, "and, to ſo ardent a temper, a neceſſary check!"

Cecilia, whom the ſurpriſe and vexation of ſo unſeaſonable a meeting, when ſhe particularly wiſhed to have eſcaped all notice, had hitherto kept in painful ſilence, began now to recover ſome preſence of mind; and making her compliments to Miſs Larolles and Mr. Goſport, with a ſlight bow to the Captain, ſhe apologized for hurrying away, but told them ſhe had an engagement in London which could not be deferred, and was then giving orders to the poſtilion to drive on, when Morrice returning full ſpeed, called out "The poor lady's ſo bad ſhe is not able to ſtir a ſtep; ſhe can't put a foot to the ground, and ſhe ſays ſhe's quite black and blue; ſo I told her I was ſure Miſs Beverley would not refuſe to make room for her in her chaiſe, till the other can be put to rights; and ſhe ſays ſhe ſhall take it as a great favour. Here, poſtilion, a little more to the right! come, ladies and gentlemen, get out of the way."

This impertinence, however extraordinary, Cecilia could not oppoſe; for Mrs. Charlton, ever

ever compaſſionate and complying where there was any appearance of diſtreſs, inſtantly ſeconded the propoſal: the chaiſe, therefore, was turned back, and ſhe was obliged to offer a place in it to Mrs. Mears, who, though more frightened than hurt, readily accepted it, notwithſtanding, to make way for her without incommoding Mrs. Charlton, ſhe was forced to get out herſelf.

She failed not, however, to deſire that all poſſible expedition might be uſed in refitting the other chaiſe for their reception; and all the gentlemen but one diſmounted their horſes, in order to aſſiſt, or ſeem to aſſiſt in getting it ready.

The only unconcerned ſpectator in the midſt of the apparent general buſtle, was Mr. Meadows; who viewed all that paſſed without troubling himſelf to interfere, and with an air of the moſt evident careleſſneſs whether matters went well or went ill.

Miſs Larolles, now returning to the ſcene of action, ſuddenly ſcreamed out, "O dear, where's my little dog! I never thought of him, I declare! I love him better than any thing in the world. I would not have him hurt for an hundred thouſand pounds. Lord, where is he?"

"Cruſhed or ſuffocated in the overturn, no doubt," ſaid Mr. Goſport; "but as you muſt have been his executioner, what ſofter death

could he die? If you will yourſelf inflict the puniſhment, I will ſubmit to the ſame fate."

"Lord, how you love to plague one!" cried ſhe: and then enquired among the ſervants what was become of her dog. The poor little animal, forgotten by its miſtreſs, and diſregarded by all others, was now diſcovered by its yelping; and ſoon found to have been the moſt material ſufferer by the overturn, one of its fore legs being broken.

Could ſcreams or lamentations, reproaches to the ſervants, or complaints againſt the deſtinies, have abated his pain, or made a callus of the fracture, but ſhort would have been the duration of his miſery; for neither words were ſaved, nor lungs were ſpared; the very air was rent with cries, and all preſent were upbraided as if accomplices in the diſaſter.

The poſtilion, at length, interrupted this vociferation with news that the chaiſe was again fit for uſe; and Cecilia, eager to be gone, finding him little regarded, repeated what he ſaid to Miſs Larolles.

"The chaiſe?" cried ſhe, "why you don't ſuppoſe I'll ever get into that horrid chaiſe any more? I do aſſure you I would not upon any account."

"Not get into it?" ſaid Cecilia, "for what purpoſe, then, have we all waited till it was ready?"

"O, I declare I would not go in it for forty thouſand worlds. I would rather walk

to

to an inn, if its a hundred and fifty miles off."

"But as it happens," ſaid Mr. Goſport, "to be only ſeven miles, I fancy you will condeſcend to ride."

"Seven miles! Lord how ſhocking! you frighten me ſo you have no idea. Poor Mrs. Mears! She'll have to go quite alone. I dare ſay the chaiſe will be down fifty times by the way. Ten to one but ſhe breaks her neck! only conceive how horrid! I aſſure you I am exceſſive glad I am out of it."

"Very friendly, indeed!" ſaid Mr. Goſport. "Mrs. Mears, then, may break her bones at her leiſure!"

Mrs. Mears, however, when applied to, profeſſed an equal averſion to the carriage in which ſhe had been ſo unfortunate, and declared ſhe would rather walk than return to it, though one of her ancles was already ſo ſwelled that ſhe could hardly ſtand.

"Why then the beſt way, ladies," cried Morrice, with the look of a man happy in vanquiſhing all difficulties, "will be for Mrs. Charlton, and that poor lady with the bruiſes, to go together in that ſound chaiſe, and then for us gentlemen to eſcort this young lady and Miſs Beverley on foot, till we all come to the next inn. Miſs Beverley, I know, is an excellent walker, for I have heard Mr. Monckton ſay ſo."

Cecilia, though in the utmoſt conſternation at a propoſal which muſt ſo long retard a journey ſhe had ſo many reaſons to wiſh haſtened, knew not how either in decency or humanity to oppoſe it: and the fear of raiſing ſuſpicion, from a conſciouſneſs how much there was to ſuſpect, forced her to curb her impatience, and reduced her even to repeat the offer which Morrice had made, though ſhe could ſcarce look at him for anger at his unſeaſonable forwardneſs.

No voice diſſenting, the troop began to be formed. The foot conſiſted of the two young ladies and Mr. Goſport, who alighted to walk with Cecilia; the cavalry, of Mr. Meadows, the Captain, and Morrice, who walked their horſes a foot pace, while the reſt of the party rode on with the chaiſe, as attendants upon Mrs. Mears.

Juſt before they ſet off, Mr. Meadows, riding negligently up to the carriage, exerted himſelf ſo far as to ſay to Mrs. Mears, "Are you hurt, ma'am?" and, at the ſame inſtant, ſeeming to recollect Cecilia, he turned about, and yawning while he touched his hat, ſaid, "O, how d'ye do, ma'am?" and then, without waiting an anſwer to either of his queſtions, flapped it over his eyes, and joined the cavalcade, though without appearing to have any conſciouſneſs that he belonged to it.

Cecilia would moſt gladly have uſed the rejected chaiſe herſelf, but could not make ſuch a propoſal

a propoſal to Mrs. Charlton, who was paſt the age and the courage for even any appearance of enterprize. Upon enquiry, however, ſhe had the ſatisfaction to hear that the diſtance to the next ſtage was but two miles, though multiplied to ſeven by the malice of Mr. Goſport.

Miſs Larolles carried her little dog in her arms, declaring ſhe would never more truſt him a moment away from her. She acquainted Cecilia that ſhe had been for ſome time upon a viſit to Mrs. Mears, who, with the reſt of the party, had taken her to ſee —— houſe and gardens, where they had made an early dinner, from which they were juſt returning home when the chaiſe broke down.

She then proceeded, with her uſual volubility, to relate the little nothings that had paſſed ſince the winter, flying from ſubject to ſubject, with no meaning but to be heard, and no wiſh but to talk, ever rapid in ſpeech, though minute in detail. This loquacity met not with any interruption, ſave now and then a ſarcaſtic remark from Mr. Goſport; for Cecilia was too much occupied by her own affairs to anſwer or liſten to ſuch unintereſting diſcourſe.

Her ſilence, however, was at length forcibly broken; Mr. Goſport, taking advantage of the firſt moment Miſs Larolles ſtopt for breath, ſaid, "Pray what carries you to

town,

town, Miſs Beverley, at this time of the year?"

Cecilia, whoſe thoughts had been wholly employed upon what would paſs at her approaching meeting with Delvile, was ſo entirely unprepared for this queſtion, that ſhe could make to it no manner of anſwer, till Mr. Goſport, in a tone of ſome ſurpriſe, repeated it, and then, not without heſitation, "I have ſome buſineſs, Sir, in London,—pray how long have you been in the country?"

"Buſineſs, have you?" cried he, ſtruck by her evaſion; "and pray what can you and buſineſs have in common?"

"More than you may imagine," anſwered ſhe, with greater ſteadineſs; "and perhaps before long I may even have enough to teach me the enjoyment of leiſure."

"Why you don't pretend to play my Lady Notable, and become your own ſteward?"

"And what can I do better?"

"What? Why ſeek one ready made to take the trouble off your hands. There are ſuch creatures to be found, I promiſe you: beaſts of burthen, who will freely undertake the management of your eſtate, for no other reward than the trifling one of poſſeſſing it. Can you no where meet with ſuch an animal?"

"I don't

"I don't know," anſwered ſhe, laughing, "I have not been looking out."

"And have none ſuch made application to you?"

"Why no,—I believe not."

"Fie, fie! no regiſter-office keeper has been peſtered with more claimants. You know they aſſault you by dozens."

"You muſt pardon me, indeed, I know not any ſuch thing."

"You know, then, why they do not, and that is much the ſame."

"I may conjecture why, at leaſt: the place, I ſuppoſe, is not worth the ſervice."

"No, no; the place, they conclude, is already ſeized, and the fee-ſimple of the eſtate is the heart of the owner. Is it not ſo?"

"The heart of the owner," anſwered ſhe, a little confuſed, "may, indeed, be ſimple, but not, perhaps, ſo eaſily ſeized as you imagine."

"Have you, then, wiſely ſaved it from a ſtorm, by a generous ſurrender? you have been, indeed, in an excellent ſchool for the ſtudy both of attack and defence; Delvile-Caſtle is a fortreſs which, even in ruins, proves its ſtrength by its antiquity: and it teaches, alſo, an admirable leſſon, by diſplaying the dangerous, the infallible power of time, which defies all might, and undermines all ſtrength; which breaks down every barrier, and ſhews nothing endurable but itſelf."

Then

Then looking at her with an arch earneſtneſs, "I think," he added, "you made a long viſit there; did this obſervation never occur to you? did you never perceive, never *feel*, rather, the inſidious properties of time?"

"Yes, certainly," anſwered ſhe, alarmed at the very mention of Delvile-Caſtle, yet affecting to underſtand literally what was ſaid metaphorically, "the havock of time upon the place could not fail ſtriking me."

"And was its havock," ſaid he, yet more archly, "merely external? is all within ſafe, ſound and firm? and did the length of your reſidence ſhew its power by no new miſchief?"

"Doubtleſs, not," anſwered ſhe, with the ſame pretended ignorance; "the place is not in ſo deſperate a condition as to exhibit any viſible marks of decay in the courſe of three or four months."

"And, do you not know," cried he, "that the place to which I allude may receive a miſchief in as many minutes which double the number of years cannot rectify? The internal parts of a building are not leſs vulnerable to accident than its outſide; and though the evil may more eaſily be concealed, it will with greater difficulty be remedied. Many a fair ſtructure have I ſeen, which, like that now before me," (looking with much ſignificance at Cecilia,) "has to the eye ſeemed perfect in all its parts, and unhurt either by time or caſualty,

ſualty, while within, ſome lurking evil, ſome latent injury, has ſecretly worked its way into the very *heart* of the edifice, where it has conſumed its ſtrength, and laid waſte its powers, till, ſinking deeper and deeper, it has ſapped its very foundation, before the ſuperſtructure has exhibited any token of danger. Is ſuch an accident among the things you hold to be poſſible?"

"Your language," ſaid ſhe, colouring very high, "is ſo florid, that I muſt own it renders your meaning rather obſcure."

"Shall I illuſtrate it by an example? Suppoſe, during your abode in Delvile-Caſtle,—"

"No, no," interrupted ſhe, with involuntary quickneſs, "why ſhould I trouble you to make illuſtrations?"

"O pray, my dear creature," cried Miſs Larolles, "how is Mrs. Harrel? I was never ſo ſorry for any body in my life. I quite forgot to aſk after her."

"Ay, poor Harrel!" cried Morrice, "he was a great loſs to his friends. I had juſt begun to have a regard for him: we were growing extremely intimate. Poor fellow! he really gave moſt excellent dinners."

"Harrel?" ſuddenly exclaimed Mr. Meadows, who ſeemed juſt then to firſt hear what was going forward, "who was he?"

"O, as good-natured a fellow as ever I knew in my life," anſwered Morrice; "he was never out of humour: he was drinking

and

and ſinging and dancing to the very laſt moment. Don't you remember him, Sir, that night at Vauxhall?"

Mr. Meadows made not any anſwer, but rode languidly on.

Morrice, ever more flippant than ſagacious, called out, "I really believe the gentleman's deaf! he won't ſo much as ſay *humph*, *hay*, now; but I'll give him ſuch a hallow in his ears, as ſhall make him hear me whether he will or no. Sir! I ſay!" bawling aloud, "have you forgot that night at Vauxhall?"

Mr. Meadows, ſtarting at being thus ſhouted at, looked towards Morrice with ſome ſurpriſe, and ſaid, "Were you ſo obliging, Sir, as to ſpeak to me?"

"Lord, yes, Sir," ſaid Morrice, amazed; "I thought you had aſked ſomething about Mr. Harrel, ſo I juſt made an anſwer to it;—that's all."

"Sir, you are very good," returned he, ſlightly bowing and then looking another way, as if thoroughly ſatisfied with what had paſſed.

"But I ſay, Sir," reſumed Morrice, don't you remember how Mr. Harrel—"

"Mr. who, Sir?"

"Mr. Harrel, Sir; was not you juſt now aſking me who he was?"

"O, ay, true," cried Meadows, in a tone of extreme wearineſs, "I am much obliged to you. Pray give my reſpects to him."

And,

And, touching his hat, he was riding away; but the aſtoniſhed Morrice called out, "Your reſpects to him? why lord! Sir, don't you know he's dead?"

"Dead!—who, Sir?"

"Why Mr. Harrel, Sir."

"Harrel?—O, very true," cried Meadows, with a face of ſudden recollection; "he ſhot himſelf, I think, or was knocked down, or ſomething of that ſort: I remember it perfectly."

"O pray," cried Miſs Larolles, "don't let's talk about it, it's the cruelleſt thing I ever knew in my life. I aſſure you I was ſo ſhocked, I thought I ſhould never have got the better of it. I remember the next night at Ranelagh I could talk of nothing elſe. I dare ſay I told it to five hundred people, I aſſure you I was tired to death; only conceive how diſtreſſing!"

"An excellent method," cried Mr. Goſport, "to drive it out of your own head, by driving it into the heads of your neighbours! But were you not afraid, by ſuch an ebullition of pathos, to burſt as many hearts as you had auditors?"

"O, I aſſure you," cried ſhe, "every body was ſo exceſſive ſhocked you've no notion; one heard of nothing elſe; all the world was raving mad about it."

"Really yes," cried the captain; "the ſubject was *obſedé* upon one *partout*. There was

was ſcarce any breathing for it: it poured from all directions; I muſt confeſs I was *ane-anti* with it to a degree."

"But the moſt ſhocking thing in nature," cried Miſs Larolles, "was going to the ſale. I never miſſed a ſingle day. One uſed to meet the whole world there, and every body was ſo ſorry you can't conceive. It was quite horrid. I aſſure you I never ſuffered ſo much before; it made me ſo unhappy you can't imagine."

"That I am moſt ready to grant," ſaid Mr. Goſport, "be the powers of imagination ever ſo excentric."

"Sir Robert Floyer and Mr. Marriot," continued Miſs Larolles, "have behaved ſo ill you've no idea, for they have done nothing ever ſince but ſay how monſtruouſly Mr. Harrel had cheated them, and how they loſt ſuch immenſe ſums by him;—only conceive how ill-natur'd!"

"And they complain," cried Morrice, "that old Mr. Delvile uſed them worſe; for that when they had been defrauded of all that money on purpoſe to pay their addreſſes to Miſs Beverley, he would never let them ſee her, but all of a ſudden took her off into the country, on purpoſe to marry her to his own ſon."

The cheeks of Cecilia now glowed with the deepeſt bluſhes; but finding by a general ſilence that ſhe was expected to make ſome anſwer,

anſwer, ſhe ſaid, with what unconcern ſhe could aſſume, "They were very much miſtaken; Mr. Delvile had no ſuch view."

"Indeed?" cried Mr. Goſport, again perceiving her change of countenance;" and is it poſſible you have actually eſcaped a ſiege, while every body concluded you taken by aſſault? pray where is young Delvile at preſent?"

"I don't—I can't tell, Sir."

"Is it long ſince you have ſeen him?"

"It is two months," anſwered ſhe, with yet more heſitation, "ſince I was at Delvile-Caſtle."

"O, but," cried Morrice, "did not you ſee him while he was in Suffolk? I believe, indeed, he is there now, for it was only yeſterday I heard of his coming down, by a gentleman who called upon Lady Margaret, and told us he had ſeen a ſtranger, a day or two ago, at Mrs. Charlton's door, and when he aſked who he was, they told him his name was Delvile, and ſaid he was on a viſit at Mr. Biddulph's."

Cecilia was quite confounded by this ſpeech; to have it known that Delvile had viſited her, was in itſelf alarming; but to have her own equivocation thus glaringly expoſed, was infinitely more dangerous. The juſt ſuſpicions to which it muſt give riſe filled her with dread, and the palpable evaſion in which ſhe had been diſcovered, overwhelmed her with confuſion.

"So

"So you had forgotten," ſaid Mr. Goſport, looking at her with much archneſs, "that you had ſeen him *within* the two months? but no wonder; for where is the lady who having ſo many admirers, can be at the trouble to remember which of them ſhe ſaw laſt? or who, being ſo accuſtomed to adulation, can hold it worth while to enquire whence it comes? A thouſand Mr. Delviles are to Miſs Beverley but as one; uſed from them all to the ſame tale, ſhe regards them not individually as lovers, but collectively as men; and to gather, even from herſelf, which ſhe is moſt inclined to favour, ſhe muſt probably deſire, like Portia in the Merchant of Venice, that their names may be run over one by one, before ſhe can diſtinctly tell which is which."

The gallant gaiety of this ſpeech was ſome relief to Cecilia, who was beginning a laughing reply, when Morrice called out, "That man looks as if he was upon the ſcout." And, raiſing her eyes, ſhe perceived a man on horſeback, who, though much muffled up, his hat flapped, and a handkerchief held to his mouth and chin, ſhe inſtantly, by his air and figure, recognized to be Delvile.

In much conſternation at this ſight, ſhe forgot what ſhe meant to ſay, and dropping her eyes, walked ſilently on. Mr. Goſport, attentive to her motions, looked from her to the horſeman, and after a ſhort examination, ſaid,

"I think I have ſeen that man before; have *you*, Miſs Beverley?" "Me?—no,"—anſwered ſhe, "I believe not,—I hardly, indeed, ſee him now."

"*I* have, I am pretty ſure," ſaid Morrice; "and if I could ſee his face, I dare ſay I ſhould recollect him."

"He ſeems very willing to know if he can recollect any of *us*." ſaid Mr. Goſport, "and, if I am not miſtaken, he ſees much better than he is ſeen."

He was now come up to them, and though a glance ſufficed to diſcover the object of his ſearch, the ſight of the party with which ſhe was ſurrounded made him not dare ſtop or ſpeak to her, and therefore, clapping ſpurs to his horſe, he galloped paſt them.

"See," cried Morrice, looking after him, "how he turns round to examine us! I wonder who he is!"

"Perhaps ſome highwayman!" cried Miſs Larolles; "I aſſure you I am in a prodigious fright; I ſhould hate to be robbed ſo you can't think."

"I was going to make much the ſame conjecture," ſaid Mr. Goſport, "and, if I am not greatly deceived, that man is a robber of no common ſort. What think you, Miſs Beverley, can you diſcern a thief in diſguiſe?"

"No, indeed; I pretend to no ſuch extraordinary knowledge."

"That's

"That's true, for all that you pretend is extraordinary ignorance."

"I have a good mind," ſaid Morrice, "to ride after him, and ſee what he is about."

"What for?" exclaimed Cecilia, greatly alarmed; "there can certainly be no occaſion!"

"No, pray don't," cried Miſs Larolles, "for I aſſure you if he ſhould come back to rob us, I ſhould die upon the ſpot. Nothing could be ſo diſagreeable; I ſhould ſcream ſo, you've no idea."

Morrice then gave up the propoſal, and they walked quietly on; but Cecilia was extremely diſturbed by this accident; ſhe readily conjectured that, impatient for her arrival, Delvile had ridden that way, to ſee what had retarded her, and ſhe was ſenſible that nothing could be ſo deſirable as an immediate explanation of the motive of her journey. Such a meeting, therefore, had ſhe been alone, was juſt what ſhe could have wiſhed, though, thus unluckily encompaſſed, it only added to her anxiety.

Involuntarily, however, ſhe quickened her pace, through her eagerneſs to be relieved from ſo troubleſome a party: but Miſs Larolles, who was in no ſuch haſte, proteſted ſhe could not keep up with her; ſaying, "You don't conſider that I have got this ſweet little dog to carry, and he is ſuch a ſhocking plague

to

to me you've no notion. Only conceive what a weight he is!

"Pray, ma'am," cried Morrice, "let me take him for you; I'll be very careful of him, I promiſe you; and you need not be afraid to truſt me, for I underſtand more about dogs than about any thing."

Miſs Larolles, after many fond careſſes, being really weary, conſented, and Morrice placed the little animal before him on horſe-back: but while this matter was adjuſting, and Miſs Larolles was giving directions how ſhe would have it held, Morrice exclaimed, "Look, look! that man is coming back! He is certainly watching us. There! now he's going off again!—I ſuppoſe he ſaw me remarking him."

"I dare ſay he's laying in wait to rob us," ſaid Miſs Larolles; "ſo when we turn off the high road, to go to Mrs. Mears, I ſuppoſe he'll come galloping after us. It's exceſſive horrid, I aſſure you."

"'Tis a petrifying thing," ſaid the captain, "that one muſt always be *degouté* by ſome wretched being or other of this ſort; but pray be not deranged, I will ride after him, if you pleaſe, and do *mon poſſible* to get rid of him."

"Indeed I wiſh you would," anſwered Miſs Larolles, "for I aſſure you he has put ſuch ſhocking notions into my head, it's quite diſagreeable."

"I ſhall make it a principle," ſaid the captain, "to have the honour of obeying you." And was riding off, when Cecilia, in great agitation, called out, "Why ſhould you go, Sir?—he is not in our way, pray let him alone—for what purpoſe ſhould you purſue him?"

"I hope," ſaid Mr. Goſport, "for the purpoſe of making him join our company, to ſome part of which I fancy he would be no very intolerable addition."

This ſpeech again ſilenced Cecilia, who perceived, with the utmoſt confuſion, that both Delvile and herſelf were undoubtedly ſuſpected by Mr. Goſport, if not already actually betrayed to him. She was obliged, therefore, to let the matter take its courſe, though quite ſick with apprehenſion leſt a full diſcovery ſhould follow the projected purſuit.

The Captain, who wanted not courage, however deeply in vanity and affectation he had buried common ſenſe, ſtood ſuſpended, upon the requeſt of Cecilia that he would not go, and, with a ſhrug of diſtreſs, ſaid, "Give me leave to own I am *parfaitment* in a ſtate the moſt *accablant* in the world: nothing could give me greater pleaſure than to profit of the occaſion to accommodate either of theſe ladies; but as they proceed upon different principles, I am *indecidé* to a degree which way to turn myſelf!"

"Put

"Put it to the vote, then," ſaid Morrice; "the two ladies have both ſpoke; now, then, for the gentleman. Come, Sir," to Mr. Goſport, "what ſay you?"

"O, fetch the culprit back, by all means," anſwered he; "and then let us all inſiſt upon his opening his cauſe, by telling us in what he has offended us; for there is no part of his buſineſs, I believe, with which we are leſs acquainted."

"Well," ſaid Morrice, "I'm for aſking him a few queſtions too; ſo is the Captain; ſo every body has ſpoke but you, Sir," addreſſing himſelf to Mr. Meadows; "So now, Sir, let's hear your opinion."

Mr. Meadows, appearing wholly inattentive, rode on. "Why, Sir! I ſay!" cried Morrice, louder, "we are all waiting for your vote. Pray what is the gentleman's name? it's duced hard to make him hear one."

"His name is Meadows," ſaid Miſs Larolles, in a low voice, "and I aſſure you ſometimes he won't hear people by the hour together. He's ſo exceſſive abſent you've no notion. One day he made me ſo mad, that I could not help crying; and Mr. Sawyer was ſtanding by the whole time! and I aſſure you I believe he laughed at me. Only conceive how diſtreſſing!"

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"May be," ſaid Morrice, "it's out of baſhfulneſs: perhaps he thinks we ſhall cut him up."

"Baſhfulneſs," repeated Miſs Larolles: "Lord, you don't conceive the thing at all. Why he's at the very head of the *ton*. There's nothing in the world ſo faſhionable as taking no notice of things, and never ſeeing people, and ſaying nothing at all, and never hearing a word, and not knowing one's own acquaintance, and always finding fault. All the *ton* do ſo, and I aſſure you as to Mr. Meadows, he's ſo exceſſively courted by every body, that if he does but ſay a ſyllable, he thinks it ſuch an immenſe favour, you've no idea."

This account, however little alluring in itſelf, of his celebrity, was yet ſufficient to make Morrice covet his further acquaintance: for Morrice was ever attentive to turn his pleaſure to his profit, and never negligent of his intereſt, but when ignorant how to purſue it. He returned, therefore, to the charge, though by no means with the ſame freedom he had begun it, and lowering his voice to a tone of reſpect and ſubmiſſion, he ſaid, "Pray, Sir, may we take the liberty to aſk your advice, whether we ſhall go on, or take a turn back?"

Mr. Meadows made not any anſwer; but when Morrice was going to repeat his queſtion, without appearing even to know that he was near him, he abruptly ſaid to Miſs Larolles, "Pray what is become of Mrs. Mears? I don't ſee her amongſt us."

"Lord, Mr. Meadows," exclaimed ſhe, "how can you be ſo odd? Don't you remember ſhe went on in a chaiſe to the inn?"

"O, ay, true," cried he; "I proteſt I had quite forgot it; I beg your pardon, indeed. Yes, I recollect now,—ſhe fell off her horſe."

"Her horſe! Why you know ſhe was in her chaiſe."

"Her chaiſe was it?—ay, true, ſo it was. Poor thing!—I am glad ſhe was not hurt."

"Not hurt? Why ſhe's ſo exceſſively bruiſed, ſhe can't ſtir a ſtep! Only conceive what a memory you've got!"

"I am moſt extremely ſorry for her indeed," cried he, again ſtretching himſelf and yawning; "poor ſoul!—I hope ſhe won't die. Do you think ſhe will?"

"Die!" repeated Miſs Larolles, with a ſcream, "Lord, how ſhocking! You are really enough to frighten one to hear you."

"But Sir," ſaid Morrice, "I wiſh you would be ſo kind as to give us your vote; the man will elſe be gone ſo far, we ſha'n't be able to overtake him.—Though I do really believe that is the very fellow coming back to peep at us again!"

"I am *ennuyé* to a degree," cried the Captain; "he is certainly ſet upon us as a ſpy, and I muſt really beg leave to enquire of

him upon what principle he incommodes us." And inſtantly he rode after him.

"And ſo will I too," cried Morrice following.

Miſs Larolles ſcreamed after him to give her firſt her little dog; but with a ſchool-boy's eagerneſs to be foremoſt, he galloped on without heeding her.

The uneaſineſs of Cecilia now encreaſed every moment; the diſcovery of Delvile ſeemed unavoidable, and his impatient and indiſcreet watchfulneſs muſt have rendered the motives of his diſguiſe but too glaring. All ſhe had left to hope was arriving at the inn before the detection was announced, and at leaſt ſaving herſelf the cruel mortification of hearing the raillery which would follow it.

Even this, however, was not allowed her; Miſs Larolles, whom ſhe had no means to quit, hardly ſtirred another ſtep, from her anxiety for the dog, and the earneſtneſs of her curioſity about the ſtranger. She loitered, ſtopt now to talk, and now to liſten, and was ſcarce moved a yard from the ſpot where ſhe had been left, when the Captain and Morrice returned.

"We could not for our lives overtake the fellow," ſaid Morrice; "he was well mounted, I promiſe you, and I'll warrant he knows what he's about, for he turned off ſo ſhort at a place where there were two narrow lanes, that

that we could not make out which way he went."

Cecilia, relieved and delighted by this unexpected eſcape, now recovered her compoſure, and was content to ſaunter on without repining.

"But though we could not ſeize his perſon," ſaid the Captain, "we have debarraſſed ourſelves *tout à fait* from his purſuit; I hope, therefore, Miſs Larolles will make a revoke of her apprehenſions."

The anſwer to this was nothing but a loud ſcream, with an exclamation, "Lord, where's my dog?"

"Your dog!" cried Morrice, looking aghaſt, "good ſtars! I never thought of him!"

"How exceſſive barbarous!" cried Miſs Larolles, "you've killed him, I dare ſay. Only think how ſhocking! I had rather have ſeen any body ſerved ſo in the world. I ſhall never forgive it, I aſſure you."

"Lord, ma'am," ſaid Morrice, "how can you ſuppoſe I've killed him? poor, pretty creature, I'm ſure I liked him prodigiouſly. I can't think for my life where he can be; but I have a notion he muſt have dropt down ſomewhere while I happened to be on the full gallop. I'll go look him, however; for we went at ſuch a rate that I never miſſed him."

Away again rode Morrice.

"I am *abimé* to the greateſt degree," ſaid the Captain, "that the poor little ſweet fellow ſhould be loſt: if I had thought him in any danger, I would have made it a principle to have had a regard to his perſon myſelf. Will you give me leave, ma'am, to have the honour of ſeeking him *partout?*"

"O, I wiſh you would with all my heart; for I aſſure you if I don't find him, I ſhall think it ſo exceſſive diſtreſſing you can't conceive."

The Captain touched his hat, and was gone.

Theſe repeated impediments almoſt robbed Cecilia of all patience; yet her total inability of reſiſtance obliged her to ſubmit, and compelled her to go, ſtop, or turn, according to their own motions.

"Now if Mr. Meadows had the leaſt good-nature in the world," ſaid Miſs Larolles, "he would offer to help us; but he's ſo exceſſive odd, that I believe if we were all of us to fall down and break our necks, he would be ſo abſent, he would hardly take the trouble to aſk us how we did."

"Why in ſo deſperate a caſe," ſaid Mr. Goſport, "the trouble would be rather ſuperfluous. However, don't repine that one of the cavaliers ſtays with us by way of guard, leſt your friend the ſpy ſhould take us by ſurpriſe while our troop is diſperſed."

"O

"O Lord," cried Miſs Larolles, "now you put it in my head, I dare ſay that wretch has got my dog! only think how horrid!"

"I ſaw plainly," ſaid Mr. Goſport, looking ſignificantly at Cecilia, "that he was feloniouſly inclined, though I muſt confeſs I took him not for a dog-ſtealer."

Miſs Larolles then, running up to Mr. Meadows, called out, "I have a prodigious immenſe favour to aſk of you, Mr. Meadows."

"Ma'am!" cried Mr. Meadows, with his uſual ſtart.

"It's only to know, whether if that horrid creature ſhould come back, you could not juſt ride up to him and ſhoot him, before he gets to us? Now will you promiſe me to do it?"

"You are vaſtly good," ſaid he, with a vacant ſmile; "what a charming evening! Do you love the country?"

"Yes, vaſtly; only I'm ſo monſtrouſly tired, I can hardly ſtir a ſtep. Do *you* like it?"

"The country? O no! I deteſt it! Duſty hedges, and chirping ſparrows! 'Tis amazing to me any body can exiſt upon ſuch terms."

"I aſſure you," cried Miſs Larolles, "I'm quite of your opinion. I hate the country ſo you've no notion. I wiſh with all my heart it was all under ground. I declare, when I firſt go into it for the ſummer, I cry

ſo you can't think. I like nothing but London.—Don't you?"

"London!" repeated Mr. Meadows, "O melancholy! the ſink of all vice and depravity. Streets without light! Houſes without air! Neighbourhood without ſociety! Talkers without liſteners!—'Tis aſtoniſhing any rational being can endure to be ſo miſerably immured."

"Lord, Mr. Meadows," cried ſhe, angrily, "I believe you would have one live no where!"

"True, very true, ma'am," ſaid he, yawning, "one really lives no where; one does but vegetate, and wiſh it all at an end. Don't you find it ſo, ma'am?"

"Me! no indeed; I aſſure you I like living of all things. Whenever I'm ill, I'm in ſuch a fright you've no idea. I always think I'm going to die, and it puts me ſo out of ſpirits you can't think.——Does not it you too?"

Here Mr. Meadows, looking another way, began to whiſtle.

"Lord," cried Miſs Larolles, "how exceſſive diſtreſſing! to aſk one queſtions, and then never hear what one anſwers!"

Here the Captain returned alone; and Miſs Larolles, flying to meet him, demanded where was her dog?

"I have the *malheur* to aſſure you," anſwered he, "that I never was more *aneanti*

in my life! the pretty little fellow has broke another leg!"

Miſs Larolles, in a paſſion of grief, then declared ſhe was certain that Morrice had maimed him thus on purpoſe, and deſired to know where the vile wretch was?

"He was ſo much diſcompoſed at the incident," replied the captain, "that he rode inſtantly another way. I took up the pretty fellow therefore myſelf, and have done *mon poſſible* not to derange him."

The unfortunate little animal was then delivered to Miſs Larolles; and after much lamentation, they at length continued their walk, and, without further adventure, arrived at the inn.

CHAP VI.

An Interruption.

BUT here, inſtead of finding, as ſhe expected, Mrs. Charlton and freſh horſes in readineſs, Cecilia ſaw neither chaiſe nor preparation; Mrs. Charlton was quietly ſeated in a parlour, and drinking tea with Mrs. Mears.

Vexed and diſappointed, ſhe ordered horſes immediately to the chaiſe, and entreated Mrs.

Charlton to loſe no more time. But the various delays which had already retarded them, had made it now ſo late that it was impoſſible to get into London by day-light, and Mrs. Charlton not having courage to be upon the road after dark, had ſettled to ſleep at the inn, and purpoſed not to proceed till the next morning.

Half diſtracted at this new difficulty, Cecilia begged to ſpeak with her alone, and then repreſented in the moſt earneſt manner, the abſolute neceſſity there was for her being in London that night: "Every thing," ſaid ſhe, "depends upon it, and the whole purpoſe of my journey will otherwiſe be loſt, for Mr. Delvile will elſe think himſelf extremely ill uſed, and to make him reparation, I may be compelled to ſubmit to almoſt whatever terms he ſhall propoſe."

Mrs. Charlton, kind and yielding, withſtood not this entreaty, which Cecilia made with infinite pain to herſelf, from the reluctance ſhe felt to purſuing her own intereſt and inclination in oppoſition to thoſe of her worthy old friend: but as ſhe was now circumſtanced, ſhe conſidered the immediate proſecution of her journey as her only reſource againſt firſt irritating Delvile by an abrupt diſappointment, and appeaſing him next by a conceſſion which would make that diſappointment end in nothing.

The

The chaiſe was ſoon ready, and Mrs. Charlton and Cecilia were riſing to take leave of the company, when a man and horſe galloped full ſpeed into the inn-yard, and in leſs than a minute, Morrice bounced into the room.

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried he, quite out of breath with haſte, "I have got ſome news for you! I've juſt found out who that perſon is that has been watching us."

Cecilia, ſtarting at this moſt unwelcome intelligence, would now have run into the chaiſe without hearing him proceed; but Mrs. Charlton, who knew neither whom nor what he meant, involuntarily ſtopt, and Cecilia, whoſe arm ſhe leant upon, was compelled to ſtay.

Every one elſe eagerly deſired to know who he was.

"Why I'll tell you," ſaid he, "how I found him out. I was thinking in my own mind what I could poſſibly do to make amends for that unlucky accident about the dog, and juſt then I ſpied the very man that had made me drop him; ſo I thought at leaſt I'd find out who he was. I rode up to him ſo quick, that he could not get away from me, though I ſaw plainly it was the thing he meant. But ſtill he kept himſelf muffled up, juſt as he did before. Not ſo ſnug, thought I, my friend; I ſhall have you yet! It's a fine evening, Sir, ſays I; but he took no notice: ſo then I came more to the point; Sir, ſays I, I think I have had

had the pleaſure of ſeeing you, though I quite forget where. Still he made no anſwer: if you have no objection, Sir, ſays I, I ſhall be glad to ride with you, for the night's coming on, and we have neither of us a ſervant. But then, without a word ſpeaking, he rode on the quicker. However, I jogged by his ſide, as faſt as he, and ſaid, Pray, Sir, did you know any thing of that company you were looking at ſo hard juſt now? And at this he could hold out no longer; he turned to me in a moſt fierce paſſion, and ſaid, pray, Sir, don't be troubleſome. And then he got off; for when I found by his voice who he was, I let him alone."

Cecilia, who could bear to hear no more, again haſtened Mrs. Charlton, who now moved on; but Morrice, ſtepping between them both and the door, ſaid, "Now do pray, Miſs Beverley, gueſs who it was."

"No indeed, I cannot," ſaid ſhe, in the utmoſt confuſion, "nor have I any time to hear. Come, dear madam, we ſhall be very late indeed."

"O but I *muſt* tell you before you go;—why it was young Mr. Delvile! the ſame that I ſaw with you one night at the Pantheon, and that I uſed to meet laſt ſpring at Mr. Harrel's."

"Mr. Delvile!" repeated every one; "very ſtrange he ſhould not ſpeak."

"Pray,

"Pray, ma'am," continued Morrice, "is it not the ſame gentleman that was at Mr. Biddulph's?"

Cecilia, half dead with ſhame and vexation, ſtammered out, "No, no—I believe not,—I can't tell;—I have not a moment to ſpare."

And then, at laſt, ſhe got Mrs. Charlton out of the room, and into the chaiſe. But thither, before ſhe could drive off, ſhe was followed by Mr. Goſport, who gravely came to offer his advice that ſhe would immediately lodge an information at the Public-office in Bow-ſtreet, that a very ſuſpicious looking man had been obſerved loitering in thoſe parts, who appeared to harbour moſt dangerous deſigns againſt her perſon and property.

Cecilia was too much confounded to rally or reply, and Mr. Goſport returned to his party with his ſpeech unanſwered.

The reſt of the journey was without any new caſualty, for late as it was, they eſcaped being robbed: but neither robbers nor new caſualties were wanting to make it unpleaſant to Cecilia; the incidents which had already happened ſufficed for that purpoſe; and the conſciouſneſs of being ſo generally betrayed, added to the delay of her recantation, prepared her for nothing but mortifications to herſelf, and conflicts with Delvile the moſt bitter and ſevere.

It was near ten o'clock before they arrived in Pall-Mall. The houſe to which Delvile had

had given directions was eaſily found, and the ſervant ſent forward had prepared the people of it for their reception.

In the cruelleſt anxiety and trepidation, Cecilia then counted every moment till Delvile came. She planned an apology for her conduct with all the addreſs of which ſhe was miſtreſs, and determined to bear his diſappointment and indignation with firmneſs: yet the part ſhe had to act was both hard and artificial; ſhe ſighed to have it over, and repined ſhe muſt have it at all.

The inſtant there was a knock at the door, ſhe flew out upon the ſtairs to liſten; and hearing his well-known voice enquiring for the ladies who had juſt taken the lodgings, ſhe ran back to Mrs. Charlton, ſaying, "Ah, madam, aſſiſt me I entreat! for now muſt I merit, or forfeit your eſteem for-ever."

"Can you pardon," cried Delvile, as he entered the room, "an intruſion which was not *in our bond?* But how could I wait till to-morrow, when I knew you were in town to-night?"

He then made his compliments to Mrs. Charlton, and, after enquiring how ſhe had borne her journey, turned again to Cecilia, whoſe uneaſy ſenſations he ſaw but too plainly in her countenance: "Are you angry," cried he, anxiouſly, "that I have ventured to come hither to night?"

"No,

"No," anſwered ſhe, ſtruggling with all her feelings for compoſure; "what we wiſh is eaſily excuſed; and I am glad to ſee you to-night, becauſe otherwiſe—"

She heſitated; and Delvile, little imagining why, thanked her in the warmeſt terms for her condeſcenſion. He then related how he had been tormented by Morrice, enquired why Mr. Monckton had not accompanied her, and what could poſſibly have induced her to make her journey ſo late, or, with ſo large a party, to be walking upon the high road inſtead of haſtening to London.

"I wonder not," anſwered ſhe, more ſteadily, "at your ſurpriſe, though I have now no time to leſſen it. You have never, I find, received my letter?"

"No," cried he, much ſtruck by her manner; "was it to forbid our meeting till to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" ſhe repeated expreſſively, "no; it was to forbid—"

Here the door was ſuddenly opened, and Morrice burſt into the room.

The diſmay and aſtoniſhment of Delvile at ſight of him, could only be equalled by the confuſion and conſternation of Cecilia; but Morrice, perceiving neither, abruptly called out, "Miſs Beverley, I quite beg your pardon for coming ſo late, but you muſt know——" then ſtopping ſhort upon ſeeing Delvile, "Good lord," he exclaimed, "if here

here is not our *gentleman ſpy!* Why, Sir, you have not ſpared the ſpur! I left you galloping off quite another way."

"However that may be, Sir," cried Delvile, equally enraged at the interruption and the obſervation, "you did not, I preſume, wait upon Miſs Beverley to talk of *me?*"

"No, Sir," anſwered he lightly, "for I had told her all about you at the inn. Did not I, Miſs Beverley? Did not I tell you I was ſure it was Mr. Delvile that was dodging us about ſo? Though I believe, Sir, you thought I had not found you out."

"And pray, young man," ſaid Mrs. Charlton, much offended by this familiar intruſion, "how did you find *us* out?"

"Why, ma'am, by the luckieſt accident in the world! Juſt as I was riding into town, I met the returned chaiſe that brought you? and I knew the poſtillion very well, as I go that road pretty often: ſo, by the meereſt chance in the world, I ſaw him by the light of the moon. And then he told me where he had ſet you down."

"And pray, Sir," again aſked Mrs. Charlton, "what was your reaſon for making the enquiry?"

"Why, ma'am, I had a little favour to aſk of Miſs Beverley, that made me think I would take the liberty to call."

"And was this time of night, Sir," ſhe returned, "the only one you could chuſe for *that purpoſe?*"

"Why,

"Why, ma'am, I'll tell you how that was; I did not mean to have called till to-morrow morning; but as I was willing to know if the poſtillion had given me a right direction, I knocked one ſoft little knock at the door, thinking you might be gone to bed after your journey, merely to aſk if it was the right houſe; but when the ſervant told me there was a gentleman with you already, I thought there would be no harm in juſt ſtepping for a moment up ſtairs."

"And what, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, whom mingled ſhame and vexation had hitherto kept ſilent, "is your buſineſs with me?"

"Why, ma'am, I only juſt called to give you a direction to a moſt excellent dog-doctor, as we call him, that lives at the corner of ——"

"A dog-doctor, Sir?" repeated Cecilia, "and what have I to do with any ſuch direction?"

"Why you muſt know, ma'am, I have been in the greateſt concern imaginable about that accident which happened to me with the poor little dog, and ſo,——"

"What little dog, Sir?" cried Delvile, who now began to conclude he was not ſober, "do you know what you are talking of?"

"Yes, Sir, for it was that very little dog you made me drop out of my arms, by which means he broke his other leg."

"*I* made

"*I* made you drop him?" cried Delvile, angrily, "I believe, Sir, you had much better call ſome other time; it does not appear to me that you are in a proper ſituation for remaining here at preſent."

"Sir, I ſhall be gone in an inſtant," anſwered Morrice; "I merely wanted to beg the favour of Miſs Beverley to tell that young lady that owned the dog, that if ſhe will carry him to this man, I am ſure he will make a cure of him."

"Come, Sir," ſaid Delvile, convinced now of his inebriety, "if you pleaſe we will walk away together."

"I don't mean to take *you* away, Sir," ſaid Morrice, looking very ſignificantly, "for I ſuppoſe you have not rode ſo hard to go ſo ſoon; but as to me, I'll only write the direction, and be off."

Delvile, amazed and irritated at ſo many following ſpecimens of ignorant aſſurance, would not, in his preſent eagerneſs, have ſcrupled turning him out of the houſe, had he not thought it imprudent, upon ſuch an occaſion, to quarrel with him, and improper, at ſo late an hour, to be left behind: he therefore only, while he was writing the direction, told Cecilia, in a low voice, that he would get rid of him and return in an inſtant.

They then went together; leaving Cecilia in an agony of diſtreſs ſurpaſſing all ſhe had hitherto experienced. "Ah, Mrs. Charlton,"

ton," ſhe cried, "what refuge have I now from ridicule, or perhaps diſgrace! Mr. Delvile has been detected watching me in diſguiſe! he has been diſcovered at this late hour meeting me in private! The ſtory will reach his family with all the hyperbole of exaggeration;——how will his noble mother diſdain me! how cruelly ſhall I ſink before the ſeverity of her eye!"

Mrs. Charlton tried to comfort her, but the effort was vain, and ſhe ſpent her time in the bittereſt repining till eleven o'clock. Delvile's not returning then added wonder to her ſadneſs, and the impropriety of his returning at all ſo late, grew every inſtant more glaring.

At laſt, though in great diſturbance, and evidently much ruffled in his temper, he came; "I feared," he cried, "I had paſſed the time for admittance, and the torture I have ſuffered from being detained has almoſt driven me wild. I have been in miſery to ſee you again,——your looks, your manner,—the letter you talk of,—all have filled me with alarm, and though I know not what it is I have to dread, I find it impoſſible to reſt a moment without ſome explanation. Tell me, then, why you ſeem thus ſtrange and thus depreſſed? Tell me what that letter was to forbid? Tell me any thing, and every thing, but that you repent your condeſcenſion."

"That

"That letter," ſaid Cecilia, "would have explained to you all. I ſcarce know how to communicate its contents; yet I hope you will hear with patience what I acknowledge I have reſolved upon only from neceſſity. That letter was to tell you that to-morrow we muſt not meet; — it was to prepare you, indeed, for our meeting, perhaps, never more!"

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed he, ſtarting, "what is it you mean?"

"That I have made a promiſe too raſh to be kept; that you muſt pardon me if, late as it is, I retract, ſince I am convinced it was wrong, and muſt be wretched in performing it."

Confounded and diſmayed, for a moment he continued ſilent, and then paſſionately called out, "Who has been with you to defame me in your opinion? — Who has barbarouſly wronged my character ſince I left you laſt Monday? Mr. Monckton received me coldly, has he injured me in your eſteem? Tell, tell me but to whom I owe this change, that my vindication, if it reſtores not your favour, may at leaſt make you ceaſe to bluſh that once I was honoured with ſome ſhare of it!"

"It wants not to be reſtored," ſaid Cecilia, with much ſoftneſs, "ſince it has never been alienated. Be ſatisfied that I think of you as I thought when we laſt parted, and generouſly forbear to reproach me, when I aſſure you I am

am actuated by principles which you ought not to diſapprove."

"And are you then unchanged?" cried he, more gently, "and is your eſteem for me ſtill——"

"I thought it juſtice to ſay ſo once," cried ſhe haſtily interrupting him, "but exact from me nothing more. It is too late for us now to talk any longer; to-morrow you may find my letter at Mrs. Roberts's, and that, ſhort as it is, contains my reſolution and its cauſe."

"Never," cried he vehemently, "can I quit you without knowing it! I would not linger till to-morrow in this ſuſpenſe to be maſter of the univerſe!"

"I have told it you, Sir, already: whatever is clandeſtine carries a conſciouſneſs of evil, and ſo repugnant do I find it to my diſpoſition and opinions, that till you give me back the promiſe I ſo unworthily made, I muſt be a ſtranger to peace, becauſe at war with my own actions and myſelf."

"Recover, then, your peace," cried Delvile, with much emotion, "for I here acquit you of all promiſe!—to fetter, to compel you, were too inhuman to afford me any happineſs. Yet hear me, diſpaſſionately hear me, and deliberate a moment before you reſolve upon my exile. Your ſcruples I am not now going to combat, I grieve that they are ſo powerful, but I have no new arguments with which to oppoſe them; all I have to ſay, is, that

that it is now too late for a retreat to ſatisfy them."

"True, Sir, and far too true! yet is it always beſt to do right, however tardily; always better to repent, than to grow callous in wrong."

"Suffer not, however, your delicacy for my family to make you forget what is due to yourſelf as well as to me: the fear of ſhocking you, led me juſt now to conceal what a greater fear now urges me to mention. The honour I have had in view is already known to many, and in a very ſhort time there are none will be ignorant of it. That impudent young man, Morrice, had the effrontery to rally me upon my paſſion for you, and though I reproved him with great aſperity, he followed me into a coffee-houſe, whither I went merely to avoid him. There I forced myſelf to ſtay, till I ſaw him engaged with a news-paper, and then, through various private ſtreets and alleys, I returned hither; but judge my indignation, when, the moment I knocked at the door, I perceived him again at my ſide!"

"Did he, then, ſee you come in?"

"I angrily demanded what he meant by thus purſuing me; he very ſubmiſſively begged my pardon, and ſaid, he had had a notion I ſhould come back, and had therefore only followed me to ſee if he was right! I heſitated for an inſtant whether to chaſtiſe, or confide in him, but believing a few hours would make

his

his impertinence immaterial, I did neither,—the door opened, and I came in."

He ſtopt; but Cecilia was too much ſhocked to anſwer him.

"Now then," ſaid he, "weigh your objections againſt the conſequences which muſt follow. It is diſcovered I attended you in town; it will be preſumed I had your permiſſion for ſuch attendance: to ſeparate, therefore, now, will be to no purpoſe with reſpect to that delicacy which makes you wiſh it. It will be food for conjecture, for enquiry, for wonder, almoſt while both our names are remembered, and while to me it will bring the keeneſt miſery in the ſeverity of my diſappointment, it will caſt over your own conduct a veil of myſtery and obſcurity wholly ſubverſive of that unclouded openneſs, that fair, tranſparent ingenuouſneſs, by which it has hitherto been diſtinguiſhed."

"Alas, then," ſaid ſhe, "how dreadfully have I erred, that whatever path I now take muſt lead me wrong!"

"You overwhelm me with grief," cried Delvile, "by finding you thus diſtreſſed, when I had hoped—Oh, cruel Cecilia! how different to this did I hope to have met you! all your doubts ſettled, all your fears removed, your mind perfectly compoſed, and ready, unreluctantly, to ratify the promiſe with ſo much ſweetneſs accorded me!—where now are thoſe hopes!—where now——"

"Why will you not begone?" cried Cecilia uneaſily, "indeed it is too late to ſtay."

"Tell me firſt," cried he, with great energy, "and let good Mrs. Charlton ſpeak too,—ought not every objection to our union, however potent, to give way, without further heſitation, to the certainty that our intending it muſt become public? Who that hears of our meeting in London, at ſuch a ſeaſon, in ſuch circumſtances, and at ſuch hours,——"

"And why," cried Cecilia, angrily, "do you mention them, and yet ſtay?"

"I *muſt* ſpeak now," anſwered he with quickneſs, "or loſe for ever all that is dear to me, and add to the miſery of that loſs, the heart-piercing reflection of having injured her whom of all the world I moſt love, moſt value, and moſt revere."

"And how injured?" cried Cecilia, half alarmed and half diſpleaſed: "Surely I muſt ſtrangely have lived to fear now the voice of calumny?"

"If any one has ever," returned he, "ſo lived as to dare defy it, Miſs Beverley is ſhe: but though ſafe by the eſtabliſhed purity of your character from calumny, there are other and ſcarce leſs invidious attacks, from which no one is exempt, and of which the refinement, the ſenſibility of your mind, will render you but the more ſuſceptible: ridicule has ſhafts, and impertinence has arrows, which though againſt innocence they may be levelled in vain,

have always the power of wounding tranquility."

Struck with a truth which ſhe could not controvert, Cecilia ſighed deeply, but ſpoke not.

"Mr. Delvile is right," ſaid Mrs. Charlton, "and though your plan, my dear Cecilia, was certainly virtuous and proper, when you ſet out from Bury, the purpoſe of your journey muſt now be made ſo public, that it will no longer be judicious nor rational."

Delvile poured forth his warmeſt thanks for this friendly interpoſition, and then, ſtrengthened by ſuch an advocate, re-urged all his arguments with redoubled hope and ſpirit.

Cecilia, diſturbed, uncertain, comfortleſs, could frame her mind to no reſolution; ſhe walked about the room, deliberated,—determined,—wavered and deliberated again.—Delvile then grew more urgent, and repreſented ſo ſtrongly the various mortifications which muſt follow ſo tardy a renunciation of their intentions, that, terrified and perplexed, and fearing the breach of their union would now be more injurious to her than its ratification, ſhe ceaſed all oppoſition to his arguments, and uttered no words but of ſolicitation that he would leave her.

"I will," cried he, "I will begone this very moment. Tell me but firſt you will think of what I have ſaid, and refer me not to your letter, but deign yourſelf to pronounce my

doom, when you have conſidered if it may not be ſoftened."

To this ſhe tacitly conſented; and elated with freſh riſing hope, he recommended his cauſe to the patronage of Mrs. Charlton, and then, taking leave of Cecilia, "I go," he ſaid, "though I have yet a thouſand things to propoſe and to ſupplicate, and though ſtill in a ſuſpenſe that my temper knows ill how to endure; but I ſhould rather be rendered miſerable than happy, in merely over-powering your reaſon by entreaty. I leave you, therefore, to your own reflections; yet remember, and refuſe not to remember with ſome compunction, that all chance, all poſſibility of earthly happineſs for *me* depends upon your deciſion."

He then tore himſelf away.

Cecilia, ſhocked at the fatigue ſhe had occaſioned her good old friend, now compelled her to go to reſt, and dedicated the remaining part of the night to uninterrupted deliberation.

It ſeemed once more in her power to be miſtreſs of her deſtiny; but the very liberty of choice ſhe had ſo much coveted, now attained, appeared the moſt heavy of calamities; ſince, uncertain even what ſhe ought to do, ſhe rather wiſhed to be drawn than to lead, rather deſired to be guided than to guide. She was to be reſponſible not only to the world but to herſelf for the whole of this momentous tranſaction,

action, and the terror of leaving either diſſatisfied, made independence burthenſome, and unlimited power a grievance.

The happineſs or miſery which awaited her reſolution, were but ſecondary conſiderations in the preſent ſtate of her mind; her conſent to a clandeſtine action ſhe lamented as an eternal blot to her character, and the undoubted publication of that conſent as equally injurious to her fame. Neither retracting nor fulfilling her engagement could now retrieve what was paſt, and in the bitterneſs of regret for the error ſhe had committed, ſhe thought happineſs unattainable for the remainder of her life.

In this gloomy deſpondence paſſed the night, her eyes never cloſed, her determination never formed. Morning, however, came, and upon ſomething to fix was indiſpenſable.

She now, therefore, finally employed herſelf in briefly comparing the good with the evil of giving Delvile wholly up, or becoming his for ever.

In accepting him, ſhe was expoſed to all the diſpleaſure of his relations, and, which affected her moſt, to the indignant ſeverity of his mother: but not another obſtacle could be found that ſeemed of any weight to oppoſe him.

In refuſing him ſhe was liable to the deriſion of the world, to ſneers from ſtrangers, and remonſtrances from her friends, to becoming

a topic for ridicule, if not for ſlander, and an object of curioſity, if not of contempt.

The ills, therefore, that threatened her marriage, though moſt afflicting, were leaſt diſgraceful, and thoſe which awaited its breach, if leſs ſerious, were more mortifying.

At length, after weighing every circumſtance as well as her perturbed ſpirits would permit, ſhe concluded that ſo late to reject him muſt bring miſery without any alleviation; while accepting him, though followed by wrath and reproach, left ſome opening for future hope, and ſome proſpect of better days.

To fulfil, therefore, her engagement, was her final reſolution.

CHAP. VII.

An Event.

SCARCE leſs unhappy in her deciſion than in her uncertainty, and every way diſſatisfied with her ſituation, her views and herſelf, Cecilia was ſtill ſo diſtreſſed and uncomfortable, when Delvile called the next morning, that he could not diſcover what her determination had been, and fearfully enquired his doom with hardly any hope of finding favour.

But

But Cecilia was above affectation, and a ſtranger to art. "I would not, Sir," ſhe ſaid, "keep you an inſtant in ſuſpenſe, when I am no longer in ſuſpenſe myſelf. I may have appeared trifling, but I have been nothing leſs, and you would readily exculpate me of caprice, if half the diſtreſs of my irreſolution was known to you. Even now, when I heſitate no more, my mind is ſo ill at eaſe, that I could neither wonder nor be diſpleaſed ſhould you heſitate in your turn."

"You heſitate no more?" cried he, almoſt breathleſs at the ſound of thoſe words, "and is it poſſible—Oh my Cecilia!—is it poſſible your reſolution is in my favour?"

"Alas!" cried ſhe, "how little is your reaſon to rejoice! a dejected and melancholy gift is all you can receive!"

"Ere I take it, then," cried he, in a voice that ſpoke joy, pain, and fear all at once in commotion, "tell me if your reluctance has its origin in *me*, that I may rather even yet relinquiſh you, than merely owe your hand to the ſelfiſhneſs of perſecution?"

"Your pride," ſaid ſhe, half ſmiling, "has ſome right to be alarmed, though I meant not to alarm it. No! it is with myſelf only I am at variance, with my own weakneſs and want of judgment that I quarrel,—— in *you* I have all the reliance that the higheſt opinion of your honour and integrity can give me."

This was enough for the warm heart of Delvile, not only to reſtore peace, but to awaken rapture. He was almoſt as wild with delight, as he had before been with apprehenſion, and poured forth his acknowledgements with ſo much fervour of gratitude, that Cecilia imperceptibly grew reconciled to herſelf, and before ſhe miſſed her dejection, participated in his contentment.

She quitted him as ſoon as ſhe had power, to acquaint Mrs. Charlton with what had paſſed, and aſſiſt in preparing her to accompany them to the altar; while Delvile flew to his new acquaintance, Mr. Singleton, the lawyer, to requeſt him to ſupply the place of Mr. Monckton in giving her away.

All was now haſtened with the utmoſt expedition, and to avoid obſervation, they agreed to meet at the church; their deſire of ſecreſy, however potent, never urging them to wiſh the ceremony ſhould be performed in a place leſs awful.

When the chairs, however, came, which were to carry the two ladies thither, Cecilia trembled and hung back. The greatneſs of her undertaking, the hazard of all her future happineſs, the diſgraceful ſecreſy of her conduct, the expected reproaches of Mrs. Delvile, and the boldneſs and indelicacy of the ſtep ſhe was about to take, all ſo forcibly ſtruck, and ſo painfully wounded her, that the

the moment ſhe was ſummoned to ſet out, ſhe again loſt her reſolution, and regretting the hour that ever Delvile was known to her, ſhe ſunk into a chair, and gave up her whole ſoul to anguiſh and ſorrow.

The good Mrs. Charlton tried in vain to conſole her; a ſudden horror againſt herſelf had now ſeized her ſpirits, which, exhauſted by long ſtruggles, could rally no more.

In this ſituation ſhe was at length ſurpriſed by Delvile, whoſe uneaſy aſtoniſhment that ſhe had failed in her appointment, was only to be equalled by that with which he was ſtruck at the ſight of her tears. He demanded the cauſe with the utmoſt tenderneſs and apprehenſion; Cecilia for ſome time could not ſpeak, and then, with a deep ſigh "Ah!" ſhe cried, "Mr. Delvile! how weak are we all when unſupported by our own eſteem! how feeble, how inconſiſtent, how changeable, when our courage has any foundation but duty!"

Delvile, much relieved by finding her ſadneſs ſprung not from any new affliction, gently reproached her breach of promiſe, and earneſtly entreated her to repair it. "The clergyman," cried he, "is waiting; I have left him with Mr. Singleton in the veſtry; no new objections have ſtarted, and no new obſtacles have intervened; why, then, torment ourſelves with diſcuſſing again the old ones, which we have already conſidered

till every poſſible argument upon them is exhauſted? Tranquilize, I conjure you, your agitated ſpirits, and if the trueſt tenderneſs, the moſt animated eſteem, and the grateſulleſt admiration, can ſoften your future cares, and inſure your future peace, every anniverſary of this day will recompenſe my Cecilia for every pang ſhe now ſuffers!"

Cecilia, half ſoothed and half aſhamed, finding ſhe had in fact nothing new to ſay or to object, compelled herſelf to riſe, and, penetrated by his ſolicitations, endeavoured to compoſe her mind, and promiſed to follow him.

He would not truſt her, however, from his ſight, but ſeizing the very inſtant of her renewed conſent, he diſmiſſed the chairs, and ordering a hackney-coach, preferred any riſk to that of her again wavering, and inſiſted upon accompanying her in it himſelf.

Cecilia had now ſcarce time to breathe, before ſhe found herſelf at the porch of—church. Delvile hurried her out of the carriage, and then offered his arm to Mrs. Charlton. Not a word was ſpoken by any of the party till they went into the veſtry, where Delvile ordered Cecilia a glaſs of water, and having haſtily made his compliments to the clergyman, gave her hand to Mr. Singleton, who led her to the altar.

The ceremony was now begun; and Cecilia, finding herſelf paſt all power of re-tracting, ſoon called her thoughts from wiſhing it, and turned her whole attention to the awful ſervice; to which, though ſhe liſtened with reverence, her full ſatisfaction in the object of her vows, made her liſten without terror. But when the prieſt came to that ſolemn adjuration, *If any man can ſhew any juſt cauſe why they may not be lawfully joined together*, a conſcious tear ſtole into her eye, and a ſigh eſcaped from Delvile that went to her heart: but, when the prieſt concluded the exhortation with *let him now ſpeak, or elſe hereafter for ever hold his peace*, a female voice at ſome diſtance, called out in ſhrill accents, "I do!"

The ceremony was inſtantly ſtopt. The aſtoniſhed prieſt immediately ſhut up the book to regard the intended bride and bridegroom; Delvile ſtarted with amazement to ſee whence the ſound proceeded, and Cecilia, aghaſt, and ſtruck with horror, faintly ſhrieked, and caught hold of Mrs. Charlton.

The conſternation was general, and general was the ſilence, though all of one accord turned round towards the place whence the voice iſſued: a female form at the ſame moment was ſeen ruſhing from a pew, who glided out of the church with the quickneſs of lightning.

Not a word was yet uttered, every one ſeemed rooted to the ſpot on which he ſtood, and regarding in mute wonder the place this form had croſſed.

Delvile at length exclaimed "What can this mean?"

"Did you not know the woman, Sir?" ſaid the clergyman.

"No, Sir, I did not even ſee her."

"Nor you, madam?" ſaid he, addreſſing Cecilia.

"No, Sir," ſhe anſwered in a voice that ſcarce articulated the two ſyllables, and changing colour ſo frequently, that Delvile, apprehenſive ſhe would faint, flew to her, calling out "Let *me* ſupport you!"

She turned from him haſtily, and ſtill holding by Mrs. Charlton, moved away from the altar.

"Whither," cried Delvile, fearfully following her, "whither are you going?"

She made not any anſwer; but ſtill, though tottering as much from emotion as Mrs. Charlton from infirmity, ſhe walked on.

"Why did you ſtop the ceremony, Sir?" cried Delvile, impatiently ſpeaking to the clergyman.

"No ceremony, Sir," he returned, "could proceed with ſuch an interruption."

"It has been wholly accidental," cried he, "for we neither of us know the woman, who could not have any right or authority for the pro-

prohibition." Then yet more anxiouſly purſuing Cecilia, "why," he continued, "do you thus move off?—Why leave the ceremony unfiniſhed?—Mrs. Charlton, what is it you are about?—Cecilia, I beſeech you return, and let the ſervice go on."

Cecilia, making a motion with her hand to forbid his following her, ſtill ſilently proceeded, though drawing along with equal difficulty Mrs. Charlton and herſelf.

"This is inſupportable!" cried Delvile, with vehemence, "turn, I conjure you!—my Cecilia!—my wife—why is it you thus abandon me?—Turn, I implore you, and receive my eternal vows!—Mrs. Charlton, bring her back,—Cecilia, you *muſt* not go!"—

He now attempted to take her hand, but ſhrinking from his touch, in an emphatic, but low voice, ſhe ſaid "Yes, Sir, I muſt!—an interdiction ſuch as this!—for the world could I not brave it!"

She then made an effort to ſomewhat quicken her pace.

"Where," cried Delvile, half frantic, "where is this infamous woman? This wretch who has thus wantonly deſtroyed me!"

And he ruſhed out of the church in purſuit of her.

The clergyman and Mr. Singleton, who had hitherto been wondering ſpectators, came

now to offer their aſſiſtance to Cecilia. She declined any help for herſelf, but gladly accepted their ſervices for Mrs. Charleton, who, thunderſtruck by all that had paſt, ſeemed almoſt robbed of her faculties. Mr. Singleton propoſed calling a hackney coach, ſhe conſented, and they ſtopt for it at the church porch.

The clergyman now began to enquire of the pew-opener, what ſhe knew of the woman, who ſhe was, and how ſhe had got into the church? She knew of her, ſhe anſwered, nothing, but that ſhe had come in to early prayers, and ſhe ſuppoſed ſhe had hid herſelf in a pew when they were over, as ſhe had thought the church entirely empty.

A hackney coach now drew up, and while the gentlemen were aſſiſting Mrs. Charlton into it, Delvile returned.

"I have purſued and enquired," cried he, "in vain, I can neither diſcover nor hear of her.—But what is all this? Whither are you going? — What does this coach do here?— Mrs. Charlton, why do you get into it?—Cecilia, what are you doing?"

Cecilia turned away from him in ſilence. The ſhock ſhe had received, took from her all power of ſpeech, while amazement and terror deprived her even of relief from tears. She believed Delvile to blame, though ſhe knew not in what, but the obſcurity of her fears

fears ſerved only to render them more dreadful.

She was now getting into the coach herſelf, but Delvile, who could neither brook her diſpleaſure, nor endure her departure, forcibly caught her hand, and called out "You are *mine*, you are my *wife!*—I will part with you no more, and go whitherſoever you will, I will follow and claim you!"

"Stop me not!" cried ſhe, impatiently, though faintly, "I am ſick, I am ill already, —if you detain me any longer, I ſhall be unable to ſupport myſelf!"

"Oh then reſt on *me!*" cried he, ſtill holding her; "reſt but upon me till the ceremony is over!—you will drive me to deſpair and to madneſs if you leave me in this barbarous manner!"

A croud now began to gather, and the words bride and bridegroom reached the ears of Cecilia; who half dead with ſhame, with fear, and with diſtreſs, haſtily ſaid "you are determined to make me miſerable!" and ſnatching away her hand, which Delvile at thoſe words could no longer hold, ſhe threw herſelf into the carriage.

Delvile, however, jumped in after her, and with an air of authority ordered the coachman to Pall-Mall, and then drew up the glaſſes, with a look of fierceneſs at the mob.

Cecilia

Cecilia had neither ſpirits nor power to reſiſt him; yet, offended by his violence, and ſhocked to be thus publicly purſued by him, her looks ſpoke a reſentment far more mortifying than any verbal reproach.

"Inhuman Cecilia!" cried he, paſſionately, "to deſert me at the very altar!—to caſt me off at the inſtant the moſt ſacred rites were uniting us!—and then thus to look at me!—to treat me with this diſdain at a time of ſuch diſtraction!—to ſcorn me thus injuriouſly at the moment you unjuſtly abandon me!—"

"To how dreadful a ſcene," ſaid Cecilia, recovering from her conſternation, "have you expoſed me! to what ſhame, what indignity, what irreparable diſgrace!"

"Oh, heaven!" cried he with horror, "if any crime, any offence of mine has occaſioned this fatal blow, the whole world holds not a wretch ſo culpable as myſelf, nor one who will ſooner allow the juſtice of your rigour! my veneration for you has ever equalled my affection, and could I think it was through *me* you have ſuffered any indignity, I ſhould ſoon abhor myſelf as you ſeem to abhor me. But what is it I have done? How have I thus incenſed you! By what action, by what guilt have I incurred this diſpleaſure?"

"Whence," cried ſhe, "came that voice which ſtill vibrates in my ear? The prohi*bition* could not be on *my* account, ſince none

to

to whom I am known have either right or intereſt in even wiſhing it."

"What an inference is this! Over *me*, then, do you conclude this woman had any power?"

Here they ſtopt at the lodgings. Delvile handed both the ladies out. Cecilia, eager to avoid his importunities, and dreadfully diſturbed, haſtily paſt him, and ran up ſtairs; but Mrs. Charlton refuſed not his arm, on which ſhe lent till they reached the drawing-room.

Cecilia then rang the bell for her ſervant, and gave orders that a poſt chaiſe might be ſent for immediately.

Delvile now felt offended in his turn; but ſuppreſſing his vehemence, he gravely and quietly ſaid "Determined as you are to leave me, indifferent to my peace, and incredulous of my word, deign, at leaſt, before we part, to be more explicit in your accuſation, and tell me if indeed it is poſſible you can ſuſpect that the wretch who broke off the ceremony, had ever from me received provocation for ſuch an action?"

"I know not what to ſuſpect," ſaid Cecilia, "where every thing is thus involved in obſcurity; but I muſt own I ſhould have ſome difficulty to think thoſe words the effect of chance, or to credit that their ſpeaker was concealed without deſign."

"You

"You are right, then, madam," cried he, reſentfully, "to diſcard me! to treat me with contempt, to baniſh me without repugnance, ſince I ſee you believe me capable of duplicity, and imagine I am better informed in this affair than I appear to be. You have ſaid I ſhall make you miſerable,—no, madam, no! your happineſs and miſery depend not upon one you hold ſo worthleſs!"

"On whatever they depend," ſaid Cecilia, "I am too little at eaſe for diſcuſſion. I would no more be daring than ſuperſtitious, but none of our proceedings have proſpered, and ſince their privacy has always been contrary both to my judgment and my principles, I know not how to repine at a failure I cannot think unmerited. Mrs. Charlton, our chaiſe is coming; you will be ready, I hope, to ſet off in it directly?"

Delvile, too angry to truſt himſelf to ſpeak, now walked about the room, and endeavoured to calm himſelf: but ſo little was his ſucceſs, that though ſilent till the chaiſe was announced, when he heard that dreaded ſound, and ſaw Cecilia ſteady in her purpoſe of departing, he was ſo much ſhocked and afflicted, that, claſping his hands in a tranſport of paſſion and grief, he exclaimed "This, then, Cecilia, is your faith! this is the felicity you bid me hope! this is the recompenſe of my ſufferings, and the performance of your engagement!"

Cecilia,

Cecilia, ſtruck by theſe reproaches, turned back; but while ſhe heſitated how to anſwer them, he went on. "You are inſenſible to my miſery, and impenetrable to my entreaties; a ſecret enemy has had power to make me odious in your ſight, though for her enmity I can aſſign no cauſe, though even her exiſtence was this morning unknown to me! Ever ready to abandon, and moſt willing to condemn me, you have more confidence in a vague conjecture than in all you have obſerved of the whole tenour of my character. Without knowing why, you are diſpoſed to believe me criminal; without deigning to ſay wherefore, you are eager to baniſh me your preſence. Yet ſcarce could a conſciouſneſs of guilt itſelf wound me ſo forcibly, ſo keenly, as your ſuſpecting I am guilty!"

"Again, then" cried Cecilia, "ſhall I ſubject myſelf to a ſcene of ſuch diſgrace and horror? No, never!——The puniſhment of my error ſhall at leaſt ſecure its reformation. Yet if I merit your reproaches, I deſerve not your regard; ceaſe, therefore, to profeſs any for me, or make them no more."

"Shew but to them," cried he, "the ſmalleſt ſenſibility, ſhew but for me the moſt diſtant concern, and I will try to bear my diſappointment without murmuring, and ſubmit to your decrees as to thoſe from which there is no appeal: but to wound without deigning even to look at what you deſtroy,—to ſhoot at

random

random thoſe arrows that are pointed with poiſon,—to ſee them faſten on the heart, and corrode its vital functions, yet look on without compunction, or turn away with cold diſdain,—Oh where is the candour I thought lodged in Cecilia! where the juſtice, the equity, I believed a part of herſelf!"

"After all that has paſt," ſaid Cecilia, ſenſibly touched by his diſtreſs, "I expected not theſe complaints, nor that, from me, any aſſurances would be wanted; yet, if it will quiet your mind, if it will better reconcile you to our ſeparation——"

"Oh, fatal prelude!" interrupted he, "what on earth can quiet my mind that leads to our ſeparation?—Give to me no condeſcenſion with any ſuch view,—preſerve your indifference, perſevere in your coldneſs, triumph ſtill in your power of inſpiring thoſe feelings you can never return,—all, every thing is more ſupportable than to talk of our ſeparation!"

"Yet, how," cried ſhe, "parted, torn aſunder as we have been, how is it now to be avoided?"

"Truſt in my honour! Shew me but the confidence which I will venture to ſay I deſerve, and then will that union no longer be impeded, which in future, I am certain, will never be repented!"

"Good heaven, what a requeſt! faith ſo implicit would be frenzy."

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"You doubt, then, my integrity? You ſuſpect——"

"Indeed I do not; yet in a caſe of ſuch importance, what ought to guide me but my own reaſon, my own conſcience, my own ſenſe of right? Pain me not, therefore, with reproaches, diſtreſs me no more with entreaties, when I ſolemnly declare that no earthly conſideration ſhall ever again make me promiſe you my hand, while the terror of Mrs. Delvile's diſpleaſure has poſſeſſion of my heart. And now adieu."

"You give me, then, up?"

"Be patient, I beſeech you; and attempt not to follow me; 'tis a ſtep I cannot permit."

"Not follow you? And who has power to prevent me?"

"*I* have, Sir, if to incur my endleſs reſentment is of any conſequence to you."

She then, with an air of determined ſteadineſs, moved on; Mrs. Charlton, aſſiſted by the ſervants, being already upon the ſtairs.

"O tyranny!" cried he, "what ſubmiſſion is it you exact! — May I not even enquire into the dreadful myſtery of this morning?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And may I not acquaint you with it, ſhould it be diſcovered?"

"I ſhall not be ſorry to hear it. Adieu."

She was now half way down the ſtairs; when, loſing all forbearance, he haſtily flew after her, and endeavouring to ſtop her, called

out,

out, "If you do not hate and deteſt me,—if I am not loathſome and abhorrent to you, O quit me not thus inſenſibly!—Cecilia! my beloved Cecilia!—ſpeak to me, at leaſt, one word of leſs ſeverity! Look at me once more, and tell me we part not for-ever!"

Cecilia then turned round, and while a ſtarting tear ſhewed her ſympathetic diſtreſs, ſaid, "Why will you thus oppreſs me with entreaties I ought not to gratify?—Have I not accompanied you to the altar,—and can you doubt what I have thought of you?"

"*Have* thought?—Oh, Cecilia!—is it then all over?"

"Pray ſuffer me to go quietly, and fear not I ſhall go too happily! Suppreſs your own feelings, rather than ſeek to awaken mine. Alas! there is little occaſion!——Oh Mr. Delvile! were our connexion oppoſed by no duty, and repugnant to no friends, were it attended by no impropriety, and carried on with no neceſſity of diſguiſe,—you would not thus charge me with indifference, you would not ſuſpect me of inſenſibility,—Oh no! the choice of my heart would then be its glory, and all I now bluſh to feel, I ſhould openly and with pride acknowledge!"

She then hurried to the chaiſe, Delvile purſuing her with thanks and bleſſings, and gratefully aſſuring her, as he handed her into it, that he would obey all her injunctions, and not even attempt to ſee her, till he could bring her

her ſome intelligence concerning the morning's tranſaction.

The chaiſe then drove off.

CHAP. VIII.

A CONSTERNATION.

THE journey was melancholy and tedious: Mrs. Charlton, extremely fatigued by the unuſual hurry and exerciſe both of mind and body which ſhe had lately gone through, was obliged to travel very ſlowly, and to lie upon the road. Cecilia, however, was in no haſte to proceed: ſhe was going to no one ſhe wiſhed to ſee, ſhe was wholly without expectation of meeting with any thing that could give her pleaſure. The unfortunate expedition in which ſhe had been engaged, left her now nothing but regret, and only promiſed her in future ſorrow and mortification.

Mrs. Charlton, after her return home, ſtill continued ill, and Cecilia, who conſtantly attended her, had the additional affliction of imputing her indiſpoſition to herſelf. Every thing ſhe thought conſpired to puniſh the error ſhe had committed; her proceedings were diſcovered, though her motives were unknown; the

the Delvile family could not fail to hear of her enterprize, and while they attributed it to her temerity, they would exult in its failure: but chiefly hung upon her mind the unaccountable prohibition of her marriage. Whence that could proceed ſhe was wholly without ability to divine, yet her ſurmiſes were not more fruitleſs than various. At one moment ſhe imagined it ſome frolic of Morrice, at another ſome perfidy of Monckton, and at another an idle and unmeaning trick of ſome ſtranger to them all. But none of theſe ſuppoſitions carried with them any air of probability; Morrice, even if he had watched their motions and purſued them to the church, which his inquiſitive impertinence made by no means impoſſible, could yet hardly have had either time or opportunity to engage any woman in ſo extraordinary an undertaking; Mr. Monckton, however averſe to the connection, ſhe conſidered as a man of too much honour to break it off in a manner ſo alarming and diſgraceful; and miſchief ſo wanton in any ſtranger, ſeemed to require a ſhare of unfeeling effrontery, which could fall to the lot of ſo few as to make this ſuggeſtion unnatural and incredible.

Sometimes ſhe imagined that Delvile might formerly have been affianced to ſome woman who, having accidentally diſcovered his intentions, took this deſperate method of rendering them abortive: but this was a ſhort-live

and ſpeedily gave way to her eſteem for his general character, and her confidence in the firmneſs of his probity.

All, therefore, was dark and myſterious; conjecture was baffled, and meditation was uſeleſs. Her opinions were unfixed, and her heart was miſerable; ſhe could only be ſteady in believing Delvile as unhappy as herſelf, and only find conſolation in believing him, alſo, as blameleſs.

Three days paſſed thus, without incident or intelligence; her time wholly occupied in attending Mrs. Charlton; her thoughts all engroſſed upon her own ſituation: but upon the fourth day ſhe was informed that a lady was in the parlour, who deſired to ſpeak with her.

She preſently went down ſtairs, — and, upon entering the room, perceived Mrs. Delvile!

Seized with aſtoniſhment and fear, ſhe ſtopt ſhort, and, looking aghaſt, held by the door, robbed of all power to receive ſo unexpected and unwelcome a viſitor, by an internal ſenſation of guilt, mingled with a dread of diſcovery and reproach.

Mrs. Delvile, addreſſing her with the coldeſt politeneſs, ſaid, "I fear I have ſurprized you; I am ſorry I had not time to acquaint you of my intention to wait upon you."

Cecilia then, moving from the door, faintly anſwered, "I cannot, madam, but be ho-

noured by your notice, whenever you are pleaſed to confer it."

They then ſat down; Mrs. Delvile preſerving an air the moſt formal and diſtant, and Cecilia half ſinking with apprehenſive diſmay.

After a ſhort and ill-boding ſilence, "I mean not," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "to embarraſs or diſtreſs you; I will not, therefore, keep you in ſuſpenſe of the purport of my viſit. I come not to make enquiries, I come not to put your ſincerity to any trial, nor to torture your delicacy; I diſpenſe with all explanation, for I have not one doubt to ſolve: I *know* what has paſſed, I *know* that my ſon loves you."

Not all her ſecret alarm, nor all the perturbation of her fears, had taught Cecilia to expect ſo direct an attack, nor enabled her to bear the ſhock of it with any compoſure: ſhe could not ſpeak, ſhe could not look at Mrs. Delvile; ſhe aroſe, and walked to the window, without knowing what ſhe was doing.

Here, however, her diſtreſs was not likely to diminiſh; for the firſt ſight ſhe ſaw was Fidelle, who barked, and jumped up at the window to lick her hands.

"Good God! Fidelle here!" exclaimed Mrs. Delvile, amazed.

Cecilia, totally overpowered, covered her glowing face with both her hands, and ſunk into a chair.

Mrs. Delvile for a few minutes was ſilent; and then, following her, ſaid, "Imagine not I.

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am making any diſcovery, nor ſuſpect me of any deſign to develop your ſentiments. That Mortimer could love in vain I never believed; that Miſs Beverley, poſſeſſing ſo much merit, could be blind to it in another, I never thought poſſible. I mean not, therefore, to ſolicit any account or explanation, but merely to beg your patience while I talk to you myſelf, and your permiſſion to ſpeak to you with openneſs and truth."

Cecilia, though relieved by this calmneſs from all apprehenſion of reproach, found in her manner a coldneſs that convinced her of the loſs of her affection, and in the introduction to her buſineſs a ſolemnity that aſſured her what ſhe ſhould decree would be unalterable. She uncovered her face to ſhew her reſpectful attention, but ſhe could not raiſe it up, and could not utter a word.

Mrs. Delvile then ſeated herſelf next her, and gravely continued her diſcourſe.

"Miſs Beverley, however little acquainted with the ſtate of our family affairs, can ſcarcely have been uninformed that a fortune ſuch as hers ſeems almoſt all that family can deſire; nor can ſhe have failed to obſerve, that her merit and accompliſhments have no where been more felt and admired: the choice therefore of Mortimer ſhe could not doubt would have our ſanction, and when ſhe honoured his propoſals with her favour, ſhe might naturally

turally conclude ſhe gave happineſs and pleaſure to all his friends."

Cecilia, ſuperior to accepting a palliation of which ſhe felt herſelf undeſerving, now lifted up her head, and forcing herſelf to ſpeak, ſaid "No, madam, I will not deceive you, for I have never been deceived myſelf: I preſumed not to expect your approbation,—though in miſſing it I have for ever loſt my own!"

"Has Mortimer, then," cried ſhe with eagerneſs, "been ſtrictly honourable? has he neither beguiled nor betrayed you?"

"No, madam," ſaid ſhe, bluſhing, "I have nothing to reproach him with."

"Then he is indeed my ſon!" cried Mrs. Delvile, with emotion; "had he been treacherous to you, while diſobedient to us, I had indiſputably renounced him."

Cecilia, who now ſeemed the only culprit, felt herſelf in a ſtate of humiliation not to be borne; ſhe collected, therefore, all her courage, and ſaid, "I have cleared Mr. Delvile; permit me, madam, now, to ſay ſomething for myſelf."

"Certainly; you cannot oblige me more than by ſpeaking without diſguiſe."

"It is not in the hope of regaining your good opinion,—that, I ſee, is loſt!—but merely—"

"No, not loſt," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "but if once it was yet higher, the fault was my own,

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in indulging an expectation of perfection to which human nature is perhaps unequal."

Ah, then, thought Cecilia, all is over! the contempt I ſo much feared is incurred, and though it may be ſoftened, it can never be removed!

"Speak, then, and with ſincerity," ſhe continued, "all you wiſh me to hear, and then grant me your attention in return to the purpoſe of my preſent journey."

"I have little, madam," anſwered the depreſſed Cecilia, "to ſay; you tell me you already know all that has paſt; I will not, therefore, pretend to take any merit from revealing it: I will only add, that my conſent to this tranſaction has made me miſerable almoſt from the moment I gave it; that I meant and wiſhed to retract as ſoon as reflection pointed out to me my error, and that circumſtances the moſt perverſe, not blindneſs to propriety, nor ſtubbornneſs in wrong, led me to make, at laſt, that fatal attempt, of which the recollection, to my laſt hour, muſt fill me with regret and ſhame."

"I wonder not," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "that in a ſituation where delicacy was ſo much leſs requiſite than courage, Miſs Beverley ſhould feel herſelf diſtreſſed and unhappy. A mind ſuch as hers could never err with impunity; and it is ſolely from a certainty of her innate ſenſe of right, that I venture to wait upon her now, and that I have any hope to influence

her upon whoſe influence alone our whole family muſt in future depend. Shall I now proceed, or is there any thing you wiſh to ſay firſt?"

"No, madam, nothing."

"Hear me, then, I beg of you, with no predetermination to diſregard me, but with an equitable reſolution to attend to reaſon, and a candour that leaves an opening to conviction. Not eaſy, indeed, is ſuch a taſk, to a mind pre-occupied with an intention to be guided by the dictates of inclination,—"

"You wrong me, indeed, madam!" interrupted Cecilia, greatly hurt, "my mind harbours no ſuch intention, it has no deſire but to be guided by duty, it is wretched with a conſciouſneſs of having failed in it! I pine, I ſicken to recover my own good opinion; I ſhould then no longer feel unworthy of yours; and whether or not I might be able to regain it, I ſhould at leaſt loſe this cruel depreſſion that now ſinks me in your preſence!"

"To regain it," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "were to exerciſe but half your power, which at this moment enables you, if ſuch is your wiſh, to make me think of you more highly than one human being ever thought of another. Do you condeſcend to hold this worth your while?"

Cecilia ſtarted at the queſtion; her heart beat quick with ſtruggling paſſions; ſhe ſaw the

the ſacrifice which was to be required, and her pride, her affronted pride, aroſe high to anticipate the rejection; but the deſign was combated by her affections, which oppoſed the indignant raſhneſs, and told her that one haſty ſpeech might ſeparate her from Delvile for ever. When this painful conflict was over, of which Mrs. Delvile patiently waited the iſſue, ſhe anſwered, with much hesitation, "To regain your good opinion, madam, greatly, truly as I value it,—is what I now ſcarcely dare hope."

"Say not ſo," cried ſhe, "ſince, if you hope, you cannot miſs it. I purpoſe to point out to you the means to recover it, and to tell you how greatly I ſhall think myſelf your debtor if you refuſe not to employ them."

She ſtopt; but Cecilia hung back; fearful of her own ſtrength, ſhe dared venture at no profeſſions; yet, how either to ſupport, or diſpute her compliance, ſhe dreaded to think.

"I come to you, then," Mrs. Delvile ſolemnly reſumed, "in the name of Mr. Delvile, and in the name of our whole family; a family as ancient as it is honourable, as honourable as it is ancient. Conſider me as its repreſentative, and hear in me its common voice, common opinion, and common addreſs.

"My ſon, the ſupporter of our houſe, the ſole guardian of its name, and the heir of

our united fortunes, has ſelected you, we know, for the lady of his choice, and ſo fondly has fixed upon you his affections, that he is ready to relinquiſh us all in preference to ſubduing them. To yourſelf alone, then, can we apply, and I come to you—"

"O, hold, madam, hold!" interrupted Cecilia, whoſe courage now revived from reſentment, "I know what you would ſay; you come to tell me of your diſdain; you come to reproach my preſumption, and to kill me with your contempt! There is little occaſion for ſuch a ſtep; I am depreſſed, I am ſelf-condemned already; ſpare me, therefore, this inſupportable humiliation, wound me not with your ſcorn, oppreſs me not with your ſuperiority! I aim at no competition, I attempt no vindication, I acknowledge my own littleneſs as readily as you can deſpiſe it, and nothing but indignity could urge me to defend it!"

"Believe me," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "I meant not to hurt or offend you, and I am ſorry if I have appeared to you either arrogant or aſſuming. The peculiar and perilous ſituation of my family has perhaps betrayed me into offenſive expreſſions, and made me guilty myſelf of an oſtentation which in others has often diſguſted me. Ill, indeed, can we any of us bear the teſt of experiment, when tried upon thoſe ſubjects which call forth our particular propenſities. We may ſtrive to be diſintereſted, we may ſtruggle to be impartial, but

ſelf

ſelf will ſtill predominate, ſtill ſhew us the imperfection of our natures, and the narrowneſs of our ſouls. Yet acquit me, I beg, of any intentional inſolence, and imagine not that in ſpeaking highly of my own family, I mean to depreciate yours: on the contrary, I know it to be reſpectable; I know, too, that were it the loweſt in the kingdom, the firſt might envy it that it gave birth to ſuch a daughter."

Cecilia, ſomewhat ſoothed by this ſpeech, begged her pardon for having interrupted her, and ſhe proceeded.

"To your family, then, I aſſure you, whatever may be the pride of our own, *you* being its offspring, we would not object. With your merit we are all well acquainted, your character has our higheſt eſteem, and your fortune exceeds even our moſt ſanguine deſires. Strange at once and afflicting! that not all theſe requiſites for the ſatisfaction of prudence, nor all theſe allurements for the gratification of happineſs, can ſuffice to fulfil or to ſilence the claims of either! There are yet other demands to which we muſt attend, demands which anceſtry and blood call upon us aloud to ratify! Such claimants are not to be neglected with impunity; they aſſert their rights with the authority of preſcription, they forbid us alike either to bend to inclination, or ſtoop to intereſt, and from generation to generation their injuries will call out for re-

dreſs, ſhould their noble and long unſullied name be voluntarily conſigned to oblivion."

Cecilia, extremely ſtruck by theſe words, ſcarce wondered, ſince ſo ſtrong and ſo eſtabliſhed were her opinions, that the obſtacle to her marriage, though but one, ſhould be conſidered as inſuperable.

"Not, therefore, to *your* name are we averſe," ſhe continued, "but ſimply to our own more partial. To ſink that, indeed, in *any* other, were baſe and unworthy:—what, then, muſt be the ſhock of my diſappointment, ſhould Mortimer Delvile, the darling of my hopes, the laſt ſurvivor of his houſe, in whoſe birth I rejoiced as the promiſe of its ſupport, in whoſe accompliſhments I gloried, as the revival of its luſtre,—ſhould *he*, ſhould *my* ſon be the firſt to abandon it! to give up the name he ſeemed born to make live, and to cauſe in effect its utter annihilation!—Oh how ſhould I know my ſon when an alien to his family! how bear to think I had cheriſhed in my boſom the betrayer of its deareſt intereſts, the deſtroyer of its very exiſtence!"

Cecilia, ſcarce more afflicted than offended, now haſtily anſwered, "Not for me, madam, ſhall he commit this crime, not on *my* account ſhall he be reprobated by his family! Think of him, therefore, no more, with any reference to me, for I would not be the cauſe of unworthineſs or guilt in him to be miſtreſs of the univerſe!"

"Nobly ſaid!" cried Mrs. Delvile, her eyes ſparkling with joy, and her cheeks glowing with pleaſure, "now again do I know Miſs Beverley! now again ſee the refined, the excellent young woman, whoſe virtues taught me to expect the renunciation even of her own happineſs, when found to be incompatible with her duty!"

Cecilia now trembled and turned pale; ſhe ſcarce knew herſelf what ſhe had ſaid, but, ſhe found by Mrs. Delvile's conſtruction of her words, they had been regarded as her final relinquiſhing of her ſon. She ardently wiſhed to quit the room before ſhe was called upon to confirm the ſentence, but ſhe had not courage to make the effort, nor to riſe, ſpeak, or move.

"I grieve, indeed," continued Mrs. Delvile, whoſe coldneſs and auſterity were changed into mildneſs and compaſſion, "at the neceſſity I have been under to draw from you a concurrence ſo painful; but no other reſource was in my power. My influence with Mortimer, whatever it may be, I have not any right to try, without obtaining your previous conſent, ſince I regard him myſelf as bound to you in honour, and only to be releaſed by your own virtuous deſire. I will leave you, however, for my preſence, I ſee, is oppreſſive to you. Farewell; and when you *can* forgive me, I think you *will*."

"I have nothing, madam," ſaid Cecilia, coldly, "to forgive; you have only aſſerted your own dignity, and I have nobody to blame but myſelf, for having given you occaſion."

"Alas," cried Mrs. Delvile, "if worth and nobleneſs of ſoul on your part, if eſteem and tendereſt affection on mine, were all which that dignity which offends you requires, how ſhould I crave the bleſſing of ſuch a daughter! how rejoice in joining my ſon to excellence ſo like his own, and enſuring his happineſs while I ſtimulated his virtue!"

"Do not talk to me of affection, madam," ſaid Cecilia, turning away from her, "whatever you had for me is paſt,—even your eſteem is gone,—you may pity me, indeed, but your pity is mixed with contempt, and I am not ſo abject as to find comfort from exciting it."

"O little," cried Mrs. Delvile, looking at her with the utmoſt tenderneſs, "little do you ſee the ſtate of my heart, for never have you appeared to me ſo worthy as at this moment! In tearing you from my ſon, I partake all the wretchedneſs I give; but your own ſenſe of duty muſt ſomething plead for the ſtrictneſs with which I act up to mine."

She then moved towards the door.

"Is your carriage, madam," ſaid Cecilia, ſtruggling to diſguiſe her inward anguiſh under an appearance of ſullenneſs, "in waiting?"

Mrs.

Mrs. Delvile then came back, and holding out her hand, while her eyes gliſtened with tears, ſaid, "To part from you thus frigidly, while my heart ſo warmly admires you, is almoſt more than I can endure. Oh, gentleſt Cecilia! condemn not a mother who is impelled to this ſeverity, who performing what ſhe holds to be her duty, thinks the office her bittereſt misfortune, who foreſees in the rage of her huſband, and the reſiſtance of her ſon, all the miſery of domeſtic contention, and who can only ſecure the honour of her family by deſtroying its peace!—You will not, then, give me your hand?—"

Cecilia, who had affected not to ſee that ſhe waited for it, now coldly put it out, diſtantly courteſying, and ſeeking to preſerve her ſteadineſs by avoiding to ſpeak. Mrs. Delvile took it, and as ſhe repeated her adieu, affectionately preſſed it to her lips; Cecilia, ſtarting, and breathing ſhort, from encreaſing yet ſmothered agitation, called out, "Why, why this condeſcenſion?—pray,—I entreat you, madam!—"

"Heaven bleſs you, my love!" ſaid Mrs. Delvile, dropping a tear upon the hand ſhe ſtill held, "heaven bleſs you, and reſtore the tranquillity you ſo nobly deſerve!"

"Ah, madam!" cried Cecilia, vainly ſtriving to repreſs any longer the tears which now forced their way down her cheeks, "why will you break my heart with this kindneſs! why

will

will you ſtill compel me to love,—when now I almoſt wiſh to hate you!—"

"No, hate me not," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, kiſſing from her cheeks the tears that watered them, "hate me not, ſweeteſt Cecilia, though in wounding your gentle boſom, I am almoſt deteſtable to myſelf. Even the cruel ſcene which awaits me with my ſon will not more deeply afflict me. But adieu,—I muſt now prepare for him!"

She then left the room: but Cecilia, whoſe pride had no power to reſiſt this tenderneſs, ran haſtily after her, ſaying, "Shall I not ſee you again, madam?"

"You ſhall yourſelf decide," anſwered ſhe; "if my coming will not give you more pain than pleaſure, I will wait upon you whenever you pleaſe."

Cecilia ſighed and pauſed; ſhe knew not what to deſire, yet rather wiſhed any thing to be done, than quietly to ſit down to uninterrupted reflection.

"Shall I poſtpone quitting this place," continued Mrs. Delvile, "till to-morrow morning, and will you admit me this afternoon, ſhould I call upon you again?"

"I ſhould be ſorry," ſaid ſhe, ſtill heſitating, "to detain you,—"

"You will rejoice me," cried Mrs. Delvile, "by bearing me in your ſight."

And ſhe then went into her carriage.

Cecilia,

Cecilia, unfitted to attend her old friend, and unequal to the taſk of explaining to her the cruel ſcene in which ſhe had juſt been engaged, then haſtened to her own apartment. Her hitherto ſtifled emotions broke forth in tears and repinings: her fate was finally determined, and its determination was not more unhappy than humiliating; ſhe was openly rejected by the family whoſe alliance ſhe was known to wiſh; ſhe was compelled to refuſe the man of her choice, though ſatisfied his affections were her own. A miſery ſo peculiar ſhe found hard to ſupport, and almoſt burſting with conflicting paſſions, her heart alternately ſwelled from offended pride, and ſunk from diſappointed tenderneſs.

CHAP IX.

A PERTURBATION.

CECILIA was ſtill in this tempeſtuous ſtate, when a meſſage was broughther that a gentleman was below ſtairs, who begged to have the honour of ſeeing her. She concluded he was Delvile, and the thought of meeting him merely to communicate what muſt ſo bitterly afflict him, redoubled her diſtreſs,

I have juſt experienced, and which tore you from me even at the foot of the altar, ſtill remains inexplicable, ſtill continues to be involved in darkneſs and myſtery; for the wretch who ſeparated us I have never been able to diſcover."

"Have you procured, then, no intelligence?"

"No, none; though ſince we parted I have never reſted a moment."

"Make, then, no further enquiry, for now all explanation would be uſeleſs. That we *were* parted, we know, though *why* we cannot tell: but that again we ſhall ever meet—"

She ſtopt; her ſtreaming eyes caſt upwards, and a deep ſigh burſting from her heart.

"Oh what," cried Delvile, endeavouring to take her hand, which ſhe haſtily withdrew from him, "what does this mean? loveliеſt, deareſt Cecilia, my betrothed, my affianced wife! why flow thoſe tears which agony only can wring from you?—Why refuſe me that hand which ſo lately was the pledge of your faith? Am I not the ſame Delvile to whom ſo few days ſince you gave it? Why will you not open to him your heart? Why thus diſtruſt his honour, and repulſe his tenderneſs? Oh why, giving him ſuch exquiſite miſery, refuſe him the ſmalleſt conſolation?"

"What conſolation," cried the weeping Cecilia, "can I give? Alas! it is not, perhaps, *you* who moſt want it!—"

Here

Here the door was opened by one of the Miſs Charltons, who came into the room with a meſſage from her grand-mother, requeſting to ſee Cecilia. Cecilia, aſhamed of being thus ſurpriſed with Delvile, and in tears, waited not either to make any excuſe to him, or any anſwer to Miſs Charlton, but inſtantly hurried out of the room; — not, however, to her old friend, whom now leſs than ever ſhe could meet, but to her own apartment, where a very ſhort indulgence of grief was ſucceeded by the ſevereſt examination of her own conduct.

A retroſpection of this ſort rarely brings much ſubject of exultation, when made with the rigid ſincerity of ſecret impartiality: ſo much ſtronger is our reaſon than our virtue, ſo much higher our ſenſe of duty than our performance!

All ſhe had done ſhe now repented, all ſhe had ſaid ſhe diſapproved; her conduct, ſeldom equal to her notions of right, was now infinitely below them, and the reproaches of her judgment made her forget for a while the afflictions which had miſled it.

The ſorrow to which ſhe had openly given way in the preſence of Delvile, though their total ſeparation but the moment before had been finally decreed, ſhe conſidered as a weak effuſion of tenderneſs, injurious to delicacy, and cenſurable by propriety. "His power over my heart," cried ſhe, "it were now, indeed, too late to conceal, but his power over my

my underſtanding it is time to cancel. I am not to be his,—my own voice has ratified the renunciation, and ſince I made it to his mother, it muſt never, without her conſent, be invalidated. Honour, therefore, to her, and regard for myſelf, equally command me to fly him, till I ceaſe to be thus affected by his ſight."

When Delvile, therefore, ſent up an entreaty that he might be again admitted into her preſence, ſhe returned for anſwer that ſhe was not well, and could not ſee any body.

He then left the houſe, and in a few minutes ſhe received the following note from him.

To Miſs Beverley.

YOU drive me from you, Cecilia, tortured with ſuſpenſe, and diſtracted with apprehenſion, — you drive me from you, certain of my miſery, yet leaving me to bear it as I may! I would call you unfeeling, but that I ſaw you were unhappy; I would reproach you with tyranny, but that your eyes when you quitted me were ſwoln with weeping! I go, therefore, I obey the harſh mandate, ſince my abſence is your deſire, and I will ſhut myſelf up at Biddulph's till I receive your commands. Yet diſdain not to reflect that every inſtant will ſeem endleſs, while Cecilia muſt appear to me unjuſt

unjuſt, or wound my very ſoul by the recollection of her in ſorrow.

MORTIMER DELVILE.

The mixture of fondneſs and reſentment with which this letter was dictated, marked ſo ſtrongly the ſufferings and diſordered ſtate of the writer, that all the ſoftneſs of Cecilia returned when ſhe peruſed it, and left her not a wiſh but to leſſen his inquietude, by aſſurances of unalterable regard; yet ſhe determined not to truſt herſelf in his ſight, certain they could only meet to grieve over each other, and conſcious that a participation of ſorrow would but prove a reciprocation of tenderneſs. Calling, therefore, upon her duty to reſiſt her inclination, ſhe reſolved to commit the whole affair to the will of Mrs. Delvile, to whom, though under no promiſe, ſhe now conſidered herſelf reſponſible. Deſirous, however, to ſhorten the period of Delvile's uncertainty, ſhe would not wait till the time ſhe had appointed to ſee his mother, but wrote the following note to haſten their meeting.

To the Hon. Mrs. DELVILE.

Madam,

Your ſon is now at Bury; ſhall I acquaint him of your arrival? or will you announce it yourſelf? Inform me of your deſire, and I will endeavour to fulfil it. As my own agent I regard

regard myſelf no longer; if, as yours, I can give pleaſure, or be of ſervice, I ſhall gladly receive your commands. I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your moſt obedient ſervant,

CECILIA BEVERLEY.

When ſhe had ſent off this letter, her heart was more at eaſe, becauſe reconciled with her conſcience: ſhe had ſacrificed the ſon, ſhe had reſigned herſelf to the mother; it now only remained to heal her wounded pride, by ſuffering the ſacrifice with dignity, and to recover her tranquillity in virtue, by making the reſignation without repining.

Her reflections, too, growing clearer as the miſt of paſſion was diſperſed, ſhe recollected with confuſion her cold and ſullen behaviour to Mrs. Delvile. That lady had but done what ſhe had believed was her duty, and that duty was no more than ſhe had been taught to expect from her. In the beginning of her viſit, and while doubtful of its ſucceſs, ſhe had, indeed, been auſtere, but the moment victory appeared in view, ſhe became tender, affectionate, and gentle. Her juſtice, therefore, condemned the reſentment to which ſhe had given way, and ſhe fortified her mind for the interview which was to follow, by an

an earneſt deſire to make reparation both to Mrs. Delvile and herſelf for that which was paſt.

In this reſolution ſhe was not a little ſtrengthened, by ſeriouſly conſidering with herſelf the great abatement to all her poſſible happineſs, which muſt have been made by the humiliating circumſtance of forcing herſelf into a family which held all connection with her as diſgraceful. She deſired not to be the wife even of Delvile upon ſuch terms, for the more ſhe eſteemed and admired him, the more anxious ſhe became for his honour, and the leſs could ſhe endure being regarded herſelf as the occaſion of its diminution.

Now, therefore, her plan of conduct ſettled, with calmer ſpirits, though a heavy heart, ſhe attended upon Mrs. Charlton; but fearing to loſe the ſteadineſs ſhe had juſt acquired before it ſhould be called upon, if ſhe truſted herſelf to relate the deciſion which had been made, ſhe beſought her for the preſent to diſpenſe with the account, and then forced herſelf into converſation upon leſs intereſting ſubjects.

This prudence had its proper effect, and with tolerable tranquillity ſhe heard Mrs. Delvile again announced, and waited upon her in the parlour with an air of compoſure.

Not ſo did Mrs. Delvile receive her; ſhe was all eagerneſs and emotion; ſhe flew to her

her the moment ſhe appeared, and throwing her arms around her, warmly exclaimed, "Oh, charming girl! Saver of our family! preſerver of our honour! How poor are words to expreſs my admiration! how inadequate are thanks in return for ſuch obligations as I owe you!"

"You owe me none, madam," ſaid Cecilia, ſuppreſſing a ſigh; "on *my* ſide will be all the obligation, if you can pardon the petulance of my behaviour this morning."

"Call not by ſo harſh a name," anſwered Mrs. Delvile, "the keenneſs of a ſenſibility by which you have yourſelf alone been the ſufferer. You have had a trial the moſt ſevere, and, however able to ſuſtain, it was impoſſible you ſhould not feel it. That you ſhould give up *any* man whoſe friends ſolicit not your alliance, your mind is too delicate to make wonderful; but your generoſity in ſubmitting, unaſked, the arrangement of that reſignation to thoſe for whoſe intereſt it is made, and your high ſenſe of honour in holding yourſelf accountable to *me*, though under no tie, and bound by no promiſe, mark a greatneſs of mind which calls for reverence rather than thanks, and which I never can praiſe half ſo much as I admire."

Cecilia, who received this applauſe but as a confirmation of her rejection, thanked her only by courteſying; and Mrs. Delvile, having

ing ſeated herſelf next her, continued her ſpeech.

"My ſon, you have the goodneſs to tell me, is here — have you ſeen him?"

"Yes, madam," anſwered ſhe, bluſhing, "but hardly for a moment."

"And he knows not of my arrival?"

"No, — I believe he certainly does not."

"Sad, then, is the trial which awaits him, and heavy for me the office I muſt perform. Do you expect to ſee him again?"

"No, — yes, — perhaps, —— indeed I hardly ——— "

She ſtammered, and Mrs. Delvile, taking her hand, ſaid, "Tell me, Miſs Beverley, *why* ſhould you ſee him again?"

Cecilia was thunder-ſtruck by this queſtion, and, colouring yet more deeply, looked down, but could not anſwer.

"Conſider," continued Mrs. Delvile, "the *purpoſe* of any further meeting; your union is impoſſible, you have nobly conſented to relinquiſh all thoughts of it: why then tear your own heart, and torture his, by an intercourſe which ſeems nothing but an ill-judged invitation to fruitleſs and unavailing ſorrow?"

Cecilia was ſtill ſilent; the truth of the expoſtulation her reaſon acknowledged, but to aſſent to its conſequence her whole heart refuſed.

"The ungenerous triumph of little female vanity," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "is far, I am ſure, from your mind, of which the enlargement and liberality will rather find conſolation from leſſening than from embittering his ſufferings. Speak to me, then, and tell me, honeſtly, judiciouſly, candidly tell me,—will it not be wiſer and more right, to avoid rather than ſeek an object which can only give birth to regret? an interview which can excite no ſenſations but of miſery and ſadneſs?"

Cecilia then turned pale, ſhe endeavoured to ſpeak, but could not; ſhe wiſhed to comply—yet to think ſhe had ſeen him for the laſt time, to remember how abruptly ſhe had parted from him, and to fear ſhe had treated him unkindly;—theſe were obſtacles which oppoſed her concurrence, though both judgment and propriety demanded it.

"Can you, then," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, after a pauſe, "can you wiſh to ſee Mortimer merely to behold his grief? Can you deſire he ſhould ſee you, only to ſharpen his affliction at your loſs?"

"O no!" cried Cecilia, to whom this reproof reſtored ſpeech and reſolution, "I am not ſo deſpicable, I am not, I hope, ſo unworthy!—I will be ruled by you wholly; I will commit to you every thing;—yet *once*, perhaps,—no more!——

"Ah, my dear Miſs Beverley! to meet confeſſedly for *once*, — what were that but planting a dagger in the heart of Mortimer? What were it but infuſing poiſon into your own?"

"If you think ſo, madam," ſaid ſhe, "I had better—I will certainly—" ſhe ſighed, ſtammered, and ſtopt.

"Hear me," cried Mrs. Delvile, "and rather let me try to convince than perſuade you. Were there any poſſibility, by argument, by reflection, or even by accident, to remove the obſtacles to our connection, then would it be well to meet, for then might diſcuſſion turn to account, and an interchange of ſentiments be productive of ſome happy expedient: but here—"

She heſitated, and Cecilia, ſhocked and aſhamed, turned away her face, and cried "I know, madam, what you would ſay,—here all is over! and therefore—"

"Yet ſuffer me," interrupted ſhe, "to be explicit, ſince we ſpeak upon this matter now for the laſt time. Here, then, I ſay, where not ONE doubt remains, where ALL is finally, though not happily decided, what can an interview produce? Miſchief of every ſort, pain, horror, and repining! To Mortimer you may think it would be kind, and grant it to his prayers, as an alleviation of his miſery; miſtaken notion! nothing could ſo greatly augment it. All his paſſions would be raiſed,

all

all his prudence would be extinguiſhed, his ſoul would be torn with reſentment and regret, and force, only, would part him from you, when previouſly he knew that parting was to be eternal. To yourſelf—"

"Talk not, madam, of *me*," cried the unhappy Cecilia, "what you ſay of your ſon is ſufficient, and I will yield—"

"Yet hear me," proceeded ſhe, "and believe me not ſo unjuſt as to conſider him alone; you, alſo, would be an equal, though a leſs ſtormy ſufferer. You fancy, at this moment, that once more to meet him would ſoothe your uneaſineſs, and that to take of him a farewell, would ſoften the pain of the ſeparation: how falſe ſuch reaſoning! how dangerous ſuch conſolation! acquainted ere you meet that you were to meet him no more, your heart would be all ſoftneſs and grief, and at the very moment when tenderneſs ſhould be baniſhed from your intercourſe, it would bear down all oppoſition of judgment, ſpirit, and dignity; you would hang upon every word, becauſe every word would ſeem the laſt, every look, every expreſſion would be rivetted in your memory, and his image in this parting diſtreſs would be painted upon your mind, in colours that would eat into its peace, and perhaps never be eraſed."

"Enough, enough," ſaid Cecilia, "I will not ſee him,—I will not even deſire it!"

"Is this compliance or conviction? Is what I have ſaid true, or only terrifying?"

"Both, both! I believe, indeed, the conflict would have overpowered me.—I ſee you are right,—and I thank you, madam, for ſaving me from a ſcene I might ſo cruelly have rued."

"Oh, daughter of my mind!" cried Mrs. Delvile, riſing and embracing her, "noble, generous, yet gentle Cecilia! what tie, what connection, could make you more dear to me? Who is there like you? Who half ſo excellent? So open to reaſon, ſo ingenuous in error! ſo rational! ſo juſt! ſo feeling, yet ſo wiſe!"

"You are very good," ſaid Cecilia, with a forced ſerenity, "and I am thankful that your reſentment for the paſt obſtructs not your lenity for the preſent."

"Alas, my love, how ſhall I reſent the paſt, when I ought myſelf to have foreſeen this calamity! and I *ſhould* have foreſeen it, had I not been informed you were engaged, and upon your engagement built our ſecurity. Elſe had I been more alarmed, for my own admiration would have bid me look forward to my ſon's. You were juſt, indeed, the woman he had leaſt chance to reſiſt, you were preciſely the character to ſeize his very ſoul. To a ſoftneſs the moſt fatally alluring, you join a dignity which reſcues from their own contempt even the moſt humble of your admirers.

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"Oh madam," cried Cecilia, "talk not to me thus!—ſpeak not ſuch flattering words!—ah, rather ſcorn and upbraid me, tell me you deſpiſe my character, my family and my connections,—load, load me with contempt, but do not thus torture me with approbation!"

"Pardon me, ſweeteſt girl, if I have awakened thoſe emotions you ſo wiſely ſeek to ſubdue. May my ſon but emulate your example, and my pride in his virtue ſhall be the ſolace of my affliction for his misfortunes."

She then tenderly embraced her, and abruptly took her leave.

Cecilia had now acted her part, and acted it to her own ſatisfaction; but the curtain dropt when Mrs. Delvile left the houſe, nature reſumed her rights, and the ſorrow of her heart was no longer diſguiſed or repreſſed. Some faint ray of hope had till now broke through the gloomieſt cloud of her miſery, and ſecretly flattered her that its diſ-

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perſion was poſſible, though diſtant: but that ray was extinct, that hope was no more; ſhe had ſolemnly promiſed to baniſh Delvile her ſight, and his mother had abſolutely declared thath even the ſubject had been diſcuſſed for the laſt time.

Mrs. Charlton, impatient of ſome explanation of the morning's tranſactions, ſoon ſent again to beg Cecilia would come to her. Cecilia reluctantly obeyed, for ſhe feared encreaſing her indiſpoſition by the intelligence ſhe had to communicate; ſhe ſtruggled, therefore, to appear to her with tolerable calmneſs, and in briefly relating what had paſſed, forbore to mingle with the narrative her own feelings and unhappineſs.

Mrs. Charlton heard the account with the utmoſt concern; ſhe accuſed Mrs. Delvile of ſeverity, and even of cruelty; ſhe lamented the ſtrange accident by which the marriage ceremony had been ſtopt, and regretted that it had not again been begun, as the only means to have rendered ineffectual the preſent fatal interpoſition.

But the grief of Cecilia, however violent, induced her not to join in this regret: ſhe mourned only the obſtacle which had occaſioned the ſeparation, and not the incident which had merely interrupted the ceremony: convinced, by the converſations in which ſhe had juſt been engaged, of Mrs. Delvile's inflexibility, ſhe rather rejoiced than repined that

that ſhe had put it to no nearer trial: ſorrow was all ſhe felt; for her mind was too liberal to harbour reſentment againſt a conduct which ſhe ſaw was dictated by a ſenſe of right, and too ductile and too affectionate to remain unmoved by the perſonal kindneſs which had ſoftened the rejection, and the many marks of eſteem and regard which had ſhewn her it was lamented, though conſidered as indiſpenſable.

How and by whom this affair had been betrayed to Mrs. Delvile ſhe knew not; but the diſcovery was nothing leſs than ſurpriſing, ſince, by various unfortunate accidents, it was known to ſo many, and ſince, in the horror and confuſion of the myſterious prohibition to the marriage, neither Delvile nor herſelf had thought of even attempting to give any caution to the witneſſes of that ſcene, not to make it known: an attempt, however, which muſt almoſt neceſſarily have been unavailing, as the incident was too extraordinary and too ſingular to have any chance of ſuppreſſion.

During this converſation, one of the ſervants came to inform Cecilia, that a man was below to enquire if there was no anſwer to the note he had brought in the forenoon.

Cecilia, greatly diſtreſſed, knew not upon what to reſolve; that the patience of Delvile ſhould be exhauſted, ſhe did not, indeed,

wonder, and to relieve his anxiety was now almoſt her only wiſh; ſhe would therefore inſtantly have written to him, confeſſed her ſympathy in his ſufferings, and beſought him to endure with fortitude an evil which was no longer to be withſtood: but ſhe was uncertain whether he was yet acquainted with the journey of his mother to Bury, and having agreed to commit to her the whole management of the affair, ſhe feared it would be diſhonourable to take any ſtep in it without her concurrence. She returned, therefore, a meſſage that ſhe had yet no anſwer ready.

In a very few minutes Delvile called himſelf, and ſent up an earneſt requeſt for permiſſion to ſee her.

Here, at leaſt, ſhe had no perplexity; an interview ſhe had given her poſitive word to refuſe, and therefore, without a moment's heſitation, ſhe bid the ſervant inform him ſhe was particularly engaged, and ſorry it was not in her power to ſee any company.

In the greateſt perturbation he left the houſe, and immediately wrote to her the following lines.

To Miſs BEVERLEY.

I entreat you to ſee me! if only for an inſtant, I entreat, I implore you to ſee me! Mrs. Charlton may be preſent —— all the world,

world, if you wiſh it, may be preſent,—but deny me not admiſſion, I ſupplicate, I conjure you!

I will call in an hour; in that time you may have finiſhed your preſent engagement. I will otherwiſe wait longer, and call again. You will not, I think, turn me from your door, and, till I have ſeen you, I can only live in its vicinity.

M. D.

The man who brought this note, waited not for any anſwer.

Cecilia read it in an agony of mind inexpreſſible: ſhe ſaw, by its ſtyle, how much Delvile was irritated, and her knowledge of his temper made her certain his irritation proceeded from believing himſelf ill-uſed. She ardently wiſhed to appeaſe and to quiet him, and regretted the neceſſity of appearing obdurate and unfeeling, even more, at that moment, than the ſeparation itſelf. To a mind priding in its purity, and animated in its affections, few ſenſations can excite keener miſery, than thoſe by which an apprehenſion is raiſed of being thought worthleſs or ungrateful by the objects of our choſen regard. To be deprived of their ſociety is leſs bitter, to be robbed of our own tranquillity by any other means, is leſs afflicting.

Yet to this it was neceſſary to ſubmit, or incur the only penalty which, to ſuch a mind, would be more ſevere, ſelf-reproach: ſhe had promiſed to be governed by Mrs. Delvile; ſhe had nothing, therefore, to do but obey her.

Yet *to turn*, as he expreſſed himſelf, *from the door*, a man who, but for an incident the moſt incomprehenſible, would now have been ſole maſter of herſelf and her actions, ſeemed ſo unkind and ſo tyrannical, that ſhe could not endure to be within hearing of his repulſe: ſhe begged, therefore, the uſe of Mrs. Charlton's carriage, and determined to make a viſit to Mrs. Harrel till Delvile and his mother had wholly quitted Bury. She was not, indeed, quite ſatisfied in going to the houſe of Mr. Arnott, but ſhe had no time to weigh objections, and knew not any other place to which ſtill greater might not be ſtarted.

She wrote a ſhort letter to Mrs. Delvile, acquainting her with her purpoſe, and its reaſon, and repeating her aſſurances, that ſhe would be guided by her implicitly; and then, embracing Mrs. Charlton, whom ſhe left to the care of her grand-daughters, ſhe got into a chaiſe, accompanied only by her maid, and one man and horſe, and ordered the poſtillion to drive to Mr. Arnott's.

BOOK VIII.

CHAP. I.

A COTTAGE.

THE evening was already far advanced, and before ſhe arrived at the end of her little journey it was quite dark. When they came within a mile of Mr. Arnott's houſe, the poſtillion, in turning too ſuddenly from the turnpike to the croſs-road, overſet the carriage. The accident, however, occaſioned no other miſchief than delaying their proceeding, and Cecilia and her maid were helped out of the chaiſe unhurt. The ſervants, aſſiſted by a man who was walking upon the road, began lifting it up; and Cecilia, too buſy within to be attentive to what paſſed without, diſregarded what went forward, till ſhe heard her footman call for help. She then haſtily advanced to enquire what was the matter, and found that the paſſenger who had lent his aid, had, by working in the dark, unfortunately ſlipped his foot under one of the wheels, and ſo much hurt it, that without great pain he could not put it to the ground.

Cecilia immediately deſired that the ſufferer might be carried to his own home in the chaiſe, while ſhe and the maid walked on to Mr. Arnott's, attended by her ſervant on horſeback.

This little incident proved of ſingular ſervice to her upon firſt entering the houſe; Mrs. Harrel was at ſupper with her brother, and hearing the voice of Cecilia in the hall, haſtened with the extremeſt ſurpriſe to enquire what had occaſioned ſo late a viſit; followed by Mr. Arnott, whoſe amazement was accompanied with a thouſand other ſenſations too powerful for ſpeech. Cecilia, unprepared with any excuſe, inſtantly related the adventure ſhe had met with on the road, which quieted their curioſity, by turning their attention to her perſonal ſafety. They ordered a room to be prepared for her, entreated her to go to reſt with all ſpeed, and poſtpone any further account till the next day. With this requeſt ſhe moſt gladly complied, happy to be ſpared the embarraſſment of enquiry, and rejoiced to be relieved from the fatigue of converſation.

Her night was reſtleſs and miſerable: to know how Delvile would bear her flight was never a moment from her thoughts, and to hear whether he would obey or oppoſe his mother was her inceſſant wiſh. She was fixt, however, to be faithful in refuſing to ſee him,

and

and at leaſt to ſuffer nothing new from her own enterpriſe or fault.

Early in the morning Mrs. Harrel came to ſee her. She was eager to learn why, after invitations repeatedly refuſed, ſhe was thus ſuddenly arrived without any; and ſhe was ſtill more eager to talk of herſelf, and relate the weary life ſhe led, thus ſhut up in the country, and confined to the ſociety of her brother.

Cecilia evaded giving any immediate anſwer to her queſtions, and Mrs. Harrel, happy in an opportunity to rehearſe her own complaints, ſoon forgot that ſhe had aſked any, and, in a very ſhort time, was perfectly, though imperceptibly, contented to be herſelf the only ſubject upon which they converſed.

But not ſuch was the ſelfiſhneſs of Mr. Arnott; and Cecilia, when ſhe went down to breakfaſt, perceived with the utmoſt concern that he had paſſed a night as ſleepleſs as her own. A viſit ſo ſudden, ſo unexpected, and ſo unaccountable, from an object that no diſcouragement could make him think of with indifference, had been a ſubject to him of conjecture and wonder that had revived all the hopes and fears which had lately, though ſtill unextinguiſhed, lain dormant. The enquiries, however, which his ſiſter had given up, he ventured not to renew, and thought himſelf but too happy in her preſence, whatever might be the cauſe of her viſit.

He

He perceived, however, immediately, the ſadneſs that hung upon her mind, and his own was redoubled by the ſight: Mrs. Harrel, alſo, ſaw that ſhe looked ill, but attributed it to the fatigue and fright of the preceding evening, well knowing that a ſimilar accident would have made her ill herſelf, or fancy that ſhe was ſo.

During breakfaſt, Cecilia ſent for the poſtillion, to enquire of him how the man had fared, whoſe good-natured aſſiſtance in their diſtreſs had been ſo unfortunate to himſelf. He anſwered that he had turned out to be a day-labourer, who lived about half a mile off. And then, partly to gratify her own humanity, and partly to find any other employment for herſelf and friends than unintereſting converſation, ſhe propoſed that they ſhould all walk to the poor man's habitation, and offer him ſome amends for the injury he had received. This was readily aſſented to, and the poſtillion directed them whither to go.

The place was a cottage, ſituated upon a common; they entered it without ceremony, and found a clean looking woman at work.

Cecilia enquired for her huſband, and was told that he was gone out to day-labour.

"I am very glad to hear it," returned ſhe; "I hope then he has got the better of the accident he met with laſt night?"

"It was not him, madam," ſaid the woman, "*met* with the accident, it was John; *there he is*, working in the garden."

To

To the garden they all went, and ſaw him upon the ground, weeding.

The moment they approached he aroſe, and, without ſpeaking, began to limp, for he could hardly walk, away.

"I am ſorry, maſter," ſaid Cecilia, "that you are ſo much hurt. Have you had any thing put to your foot?"

The man made no anſwer, but ſtill turned away from her; a glance, however, of his eye, which the next inſtant he fixed upon the ground, ſtartled her; ſhe moved round to look at him again,—and perceived Mr. Belfield!

"Good God!" ſhe exclaimed; but ſeeing him ſtill retreat, ſhe recollected in a moment how little he would be obliged to her for betraying him, and, ſuffering him to go on, turned back to her party, and led the way again into the houſe.

As ſoon as the firſt emotion of her ſurpriſe was over, ſhe enquired how long *John* had belonged to this cottage, and what was his way of life.

The woman anſwered he had only been with them a week, and went out to day-labour with her huſband.

Cecilia then, finding their ſtay kept him from his employment, and willing to ſave him the diſtreſs of being ſeen by Mr. Arnott or Mrs. Harrel, propoſed their returning home. She grieved moſt ſincerely at beholding in ſo melancholy an occupation a young

man

man of ſuch talents and abilities; ſhe wiſhed much to aſſiſt him, and began conſidering by what means it might be done, when, as they were walking from the cottage, a voice at ſome diſtance called out, "Madam! Miſs Beverley!" and, looking round, to her utter amazement ſhe ſaw Belfield endeavouring to follow her.

She inſtantly ſtopt, and he advanced, his hat in his hand, and his whole air indicating he ſought not to be diſguiſed.

Surpriſed at this ſudden change of behaviour, ſhe then ſtept forward to meet him, accompanied by her friends: but when they came up to each other, ſhe checked her deſire of ſpeaking, to leave him fully at liberty to make himſelf known, or keep concealed.

He bowed with a look of aſſumed gaiety and eaſe, but the deep ſcarlet that tinged his whole face manifeſted his internal confuſion; and in a voice that attempted to ſound lively, though its tremulous accents betrayed uneaſineſs and diſtreſs, he exclaimed, with a forced ſmile, "Is it poſſible Miſs Beverley can deign to notice a poor miſerable day-labourer ſuch as I am? how will ſhe be juſtified in the beau monde, when even the ſight of ſuch a wretch ought to fill her with horror? Henceforth let hyſterics be blown to the winds, and let nerves be diſcarded from the female vocabulary, ſince a lady ſo young and fair can ſtand *this ſhock* without hartſhorn or fainting!"

"I am

"I am happy," anſwered Cecilia, "to find your ſpirits ſo good; yet my own, I muſt confeſs, are not raiſed by ſeeing you in this ſtrange ſituation."

"My ſpirits!" cried he, with an air of defiance, "never were they better, never ſo good as at this moment. Strange as ſeems my ſituation, it is all that I wiſh; I have found out, at laſt, the true ſecret of happineſs! that ſecret which ſo long I purſued in vain, but which always eluded my graſp, till the inſtant of deſpair arrived, when, ſlackening my pace, I gave it up as a phantom. Go from me, I cried, I will be cheated no more! thou airy bubble! thou fleeting ſhadow! I will live no longer in thy ſight, ſince thy beams dazzle without warming me! Mankind ſeems only compoſed as matter for thy experiments, and I will quit the whole race, that thy deluſions may be preſented to me no more!"

This romantic flight, which ſtartled even Cecilia, though acquainted with his character, gave to Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott the utmoſt ſurpriſe; his appearance, and the account they had juſt heard of him, having by no means prepared them for ſuch ſentiments or ſuch language.

"Is then this great ſecret of happineſs," ſaid Cecilia, "nothing, at laſt, but total ſeclusion from the world?"

"No,

"No, madam," anſwered he, "it is labour with independence."

Cecilia now wiſhed much to aſk ſome explanation of his affairs, but was doubtful whether he would gratify her before Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott, and hurt to keep him ſtanding, though he leant upon a ſtick; ſhe told him, therefore, ſhe would at preſent detain him no longer, but endeavour again to ſee him before ſhe quitted her friends.

Mr. Arnott then interfered, and deſired his ſiſter would entreat Miſs Beverley to invite whom ſhe pleaſed to his houſe.

Cecilia thanked him, and inſtantly aſked Belfield to call upon her in the afternoon.

"No, madam, no," cried he, "I have done with viſits and ſociety! I will not ſo ſoon break through a ſyſtem with much difficulty formed, when all my future tranquillity depends upon adhering to it. The worthleſſneſs of mankind has diſguſted me with the world, and my reſolution in quitting it ſhall be immoveable as its baſeneſs."

"I muſt not venture, then," ſaid Cecilia, to enquire——"

"Enquire, madam," interrupted he with quickneſs, "what you pleaſe: there is nothing I will not anſwer to you,—to this lady, to this gentleman, to any and to every body.—What can I wiſh to conceal, where I have nothing to gain or to loſe? When firſt, indeed, I ſaw you, I involuntarily ſhrunk; a weak

ſhame

ſhame for a moment ſeized me, I felt fallen and debaſed, and I wiſhed to avoid you; but a little recollection brought me back to my ſenſes. And where, cried I, is the diſgrace of exerciſing for my ſubſiſtence the ſtrength with which I am endued? and why ſhould I bluſh to lead the life which uncorrupted Nature firſt preſcribed to man?"

"Well, then," ſaid Cecilia, more and more intereſted to hear him, "if you will not viſit us, will you at leaſt permit us to return with you to ſome place where you can be ſeated?"

"I will with pleaſure," cried he, "go to any place where you may be ſeated yourſelves; but for me, I have ceaſed to regard accommodation or inconvenience."

They then all went back to the cottage, which was now empty, the woman being out at work.

"Will you then, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "give me leave to enquire whether Lord Vannelt is acquainted with your retirement, and if it will not much ſurpriſe and diſappoint him?"

"Lord Vannelt," cried he, haughtily, "has no right to be ſurpriſed. I would have quitted *his* houſe, if no other, not even this cottage, had a roof to afford me ſhelter!"

"I am ſorry, indeed, to hear it," ſaid Cecilia; "I had hoped he would have known your value, and merited your regard."

"Ill-

"Ill-uſage," anſwered he, "is as hard to relate as to be endured. There is commonly ſomething pitiful in a complaint; and though oppreſſion in a general ſenſe provokes the wrath of mankind, the inveſtigation of its minuter circumſtances excites nothing but deriſion. Thoſe who give the offence, by the worthy few may be hated, but thoſe who receive it, by the world at large will be deſpiſed. Conſcious of this, I diſdained making any appeal; myſelf the only ſufferer, I had a right to be the only judge, and, ſhaking off the baſe trammels of intereſt and ſubjection, I quitted the houſe in ſilent indignation, not chooſing to remonſtrate, where I deſired not to be reconciled."

"And was there no mode of life," ſaid Cecilia, "to adopt, but living with Lord Vannelt, or giving up the whole world?"

"I weighed every thing maturely," anſwered he, "before I made my determination, and I found it ſo much the moſt eligible, that I am certain I can never repent it. I had friends who would with pleaſure have preſented me to ſome other nobleman; but my whole heart revolted againſt leading that kind of life, and I would not, therefore, idly rove from one great man to another, adding ill will to diſgrace, and purſuing hope in defiance of common ſenſe; no; when I quitted Lord Vannelt, I reſolved to give up patronage for ever."

"I

"I retired to private lodgings to deliberate what next could be done. I had lived in many ways, I had been unfortunate or imprudent in all. The law I had tried, but its rudiments were tedious and diſguſting; the army, too, but there found my mind more fatigued with indolence, than my body with action; general diſſipation had then its turn, but the expence to which it led was ruinous, and ſelf-reproach baffled pleaſure while I purſued it; I have even — yes, there are few things I have left untried,—I have even,—for why now diſguiſe it?—"

He ſtopt and coloured, but in a quicker voice preſently proceeded.

"Trade, alſo, has had its ſhare in my experiments: for that, in truth, I was originally deſtined, — but my education had ill ſuited me to ſuch a deſtination, and the trader's firſt maxim I reverſed, in laviſhing when I ought to have accumulated.

"What, then, remained for me? to run over again the ſame irkſome round I had not patience, and to attempt any thing new I was unqualified: money I had none; my friends I could bear to burthen no longer; a fortnight I lingered in wretched irreſolution,— a ſimple accident at the end of it happily ſettled me; I was walking, one morning, in Hyde Park, forming a thouſand plans for my future life, but quarrelling with them all; when a gentleman met me on horſeback, from whom,

whom, at my Lord Vannelt's, I had received particular civilities; I looked another way not to be ſeen by him, and the change in my dreſs ſince I left his Lordſhip's made me eaſily paſs unnoticed. He had rode on, however, but a few yards, before, by ſome accident or miſmanagement, he had a fall from his horſe. Forgetting all my caution, I flew inſtantly to his aſſiſtance; he was bruiſed, but not otherwiſe hurt; I helped him up, and he leant upon my arm; in my haſte of enquiring how he had fared, I called him by his name. He knew me, but looked ſurpriſed at my appearance; he was ſpeaking to me, however, with kindneſs, when ſeeing ſome gentlemen of his acquaintance galloping up to him, he haſtily diſengaged himſelf from me, and inſtantly beginning to recount to them what had happened, he ſedulouſly looked another way, and joining his new companions, walked off without taking further notice of me. For a moment I was almoſt tempted to trouble him to come back; but a little recollection told me how ill he deſerved my reſentment, and bid me transfer it for the future from the pitiful individual to the worthleſs community.

"Here finiſhed my deliberation; the diſguſt to the world which I had already conceived, this little incident confirmed; I ſaw it was only made for the great and the rich;—poor, therefore, and low, what had I to do in it? I determined to quit it for ever, and to

end every diſappointment, by cruſhing every hope.

"I wrote to Lord Vannelt to ſend my trunks to my mother; I wrote to my mother that I was well, and would ſoon let her hear more. I then paid off my lodgings, and "ſhaking the duſt from my feet," bid a long adieu to London; and, committing my route to chance, ſtrolled on into the country, without knowing or caring which way.

"My firſt thought was ſimply to ſeek retirement, and to depend for my future repoſe upon nothing but a total ſecluſion from ſociety: but my ſlow method of travelling gave me time for reflection, and reflection ſoon ſhewed me the error of this notion.

"Guilt, cried I, may, indeed, be avoided by ſolitude; but will miſery? will regret? will deep dejection of mind? no; they will follow more aſſiduouſly than ever; for what is there to oppoſe them, where neither buſineſs occupies the time, nor hope the imagination? where the paſt has left nothing but reſentment, and the future opens only to a diſmal, unintereſting void? No ſtranger to life, I knew human nature could not exiſt on ſuch terms; ſtill leſs a ſtranger to books, I reſpected the voice of wiſdom and experience in the firſt of moraliſts, and moſt enlightened of men *, and reading the letter of Cowley, I ſaw the vanity and abſurdity of *panting after ſolitude* †.

"I ſought

* Dr. Johnſon. † Life of Cowley, p. 34.

"I ſought not, therefore, a cell; but, ſince I purpoſed to live for myſelf, I determined for myſelf alſo to think. Servility of imitation has ever been as much my ſcorn as ſervility of dependence; I reſolved, therefore, to ſtrike out ſomething new, and no more to retire, as every other man had retired, than to linger in the world as every other man had lingered.

"The reſult of all you now ſee. I found out this cottage, and took up my abode in it. I am here out of the way of all ſociety, yet avoid the great evil of retreat, *having nothing to do.* I am conſtantly, not capriciouſly employed, and the exerciſe which benefits my health, imperceptibly raiſes my ſpirits in deſpight of adverſity. I am removed from all temptation, I have ſcarce even the power to do wrong; I have no object for ambition, for repining I have no time:—I have found out, I repeat, the true ſecret of happineſs, labour with independence."

He ſtopt; and Cecilia, who had liſtened to this narrative with a mixture of compaſſion, admiration and cenſure, was too much ſtruck with its ſingularity to be readily able to anſwer it. Her curioſity to hear him had ſprung wholly from her deſire to aſſiſt him, and ſhe had expected from his ſtory to gather ſome hint upon which her ſervices might be offered. But none had occurred; he profeſſed himſelf fully ſatisfied with his ſituation; and though reaſon and probability contradicted

ted the profeſſion, ſhe could not venture to diſpute it with any delicacy or prudence.

She thanked him, therefore, for his relation, with many apologies for the trouble ſhe had given him, and added, "I muſt not expreſs my concern for misfortunes which you ſeem to regard as conducive to your contentment, nor remonſtrate at the ſtep you have taken, ſince you have been led to it by choice, not neceſſity: but yet, you muſt pardon me if I cannot help hoping I ſhall ſome time ſee you happier, according to the common, however vulgar ideas of the reſt of the world."

"No, never, never! I am ſick of mankind, not from theory, but experience; and the precautions I have taken againſt mental fatigue, will ſecure me from repentance, or any deſire of change; for it is not the active, but the indolent who weary; it is not the temperate, but the pampered who are capricious."

"Is your ſiſter, Sir, acquainted with this change in your fortune and opinions?"

"Poor girl, no! She and her unhappy mother have borne but too long with my enterprizes and misfortunes. Even yet they would ſacrifice whatever they poſſeſs to enable me to play once more the game ſo often loſt; but I will not abuſe their affection, nor ſuffer them again to be ſlaves to my caprices, nor dupes to their own deluſive expectations. I have ſent them word I am happy; I have not yet told them how or where. I fear much

the affliction of their diſappointment, and, for a while, ſhall conceal from them my ſituation, which they would fancy was diſgraceful, and grieve at as cruel."

"And is it *not* cruel?" ſaid Cecilia, "is labour indeed ſo ſweet? and can you ſeriouſly derive happineſs from what all others conſider as miſery?"

"Not ſweet," anſwered he, "in itſelf; but ſweet, moſt ſweet and ſalutary in its effects. When I work, I forget all the world; my projects for the future, my diſappointments from the paſt. Mental fatigue is overpowered by perſonal; I toil till I require reſt, and that reſt which nature, not luxury demands, leads not to idle meditation, but to ſound, heavy, neceſſary ſleep. I awake the next morning to the ſame thought-exiling buſineſs, work again till my powers are exhauſted, and am relieved again at night by the ſame health-recruiting inſenſibility."

"And if this," cried Cecilia, "is the life of happineſs, why have we ſo many complaints of the ſufferings of the poor, and why ſo eternally do we hear of their hardſhips and diſtreſs?"

"They have known no other life." They are ſtrangers, therefore, to the felicity of their lot. Had they mingled in the world, fed high their fancy with hope, and looked forward with expectation of enjoyment; had they been courted by the great, and offered

with

with profuſion adulation for their abilities, yet, even when ſtarving, been offered nothing elſe!—had they ſeen an attentive circle wait all its entertainment from their powers, yet found themſelves forgotten as ſoon as out of ſight, and perceived themſelves avoided when no longer buffoons!—Oh, had they known and felt provocations ſuch as theſe, how gladly would their reſentful ſpirits turn from the whole unfeeling race, and how would they reſpect that noble and manly labour, which at once diſengages them from ſuch ſubjugating ſnares, and enables them to fly the ingratitude they abhor! Without the contraſt of vice, virtue unloved may be lovely; without the experience of miſery, happineſs is ſimply a dull privation of evil."

"And are you ſo content," cried Cecilia, "with your preſent ſituation, as even to think it offers you reparation for your paſt ſufferings?"

"Content!" repeated he with energy, "O more than content, I am proud of my preſent ſituation! I glory in ſhewing to the world, I glory ſtill more in ſhewing to myſelf, that thoſe whom I cannot but deſpiſe I will not ſcruple to defy, and that where I have been treated unworthily, I will ſcorn to be obliged."

"But will you pardon me," ſaid Cecilia, "ſhould I aſk again, why in quitting Lord Vannelt, you concluded no one elſe worthy a trial?"

"Becauſe it was leſs my Lord Vannelt, madam, than my own ſituation, that diſguſted me: for though I liked not his behaviour, I found him a man too generally eſteemed to flatter myſelf better uſage would await me in merely changing my abode, while my ſtation was the ſame. I believe, indeed, he never meant to offend me; but I was offended the more that he ſhould think me an object to receive indignity without knowing it. To have had this pointed out to him, would have been at once mortifying and vain; for delicacy, like taſte, can only partially be taught, and will always be ſuperficial and erring where it is not innate. Thoſe wrongs, which though too trifling to reſent, are too humiliating to be borne, ſpeech can convey no idea of; the ſoul muſt feel, or the underſtanding can never comprehend them."

"But ſurely," ſaid Cecilia, "though people of refinement are rare, they yet exiſt; why, then, remove yourſelf from the poſſibility of meeting with them?"

"Muſt I run about the nation," cried he, "proclaiming my diſtreſs, and deſcribing my temper? telling the world that though dependent I demand reſpect as well as aſſiſtance; and publiſhing to mankind, that though poor I will accept no gifts if offered with contumely? Who will liſten to ſuch an account? who will care for my misfortunes, but as they may humble me to his ſervice? who will hear my mortifica-

mortifications, but to ſay I deſerve them? what has the world to do with my feelings and peculiarities? I know it too well to think calamity will ſoften it; I need no new leſſons to inſtruct me that to conquer affliction is more wiſe than to relate it."

"Unfortunate as you have been," ſaid Cecilia, "I cannot wonder at your aſperity; but yet, it is ſurely no more than juſtice to acknowledge, that hard-heartedneſs to diſtreſs is by no means the fault of the preſent times: on the contrary, it is ſcarce ſooner made known, than every one is ready to contribute to its relief."

"And how contribute?" cried he, "by a paltry donation of money? Yes, the man whoſe only want is a few guineas, may, indeed, obtain them; but he who aſks kindneſs and protection, whoſe oppreſſed ſpirit calls for conſolation even more than his ruined fortune for repair, how is his ſtruggling ſoul, if ſuperior to his fate, to brook the oſtentation of patronage, and the inſolence of condeſcenſion? Yes, yes, the world will ſave the poor beggar who is ſtarving; but the fallen wretch, who will not cringe for his ſupport, may conſume in his own wretchedneſs without pity and without help!"

Cecilia now ſaw that the wound his ſenſibility had received was too painful for argument, and too recent immediately to be healed. She forbore, therefore, to detain him any lon-

ger, but expreſſing her beſt wiſhes, without venturing to hint at her ſervices, ſhe aroſe, and they all took their leave;—Belfield haſtening, as they went, to return to the garden, where, looking over the hedge as they paſſed, they ſaw him employed again in weeding, with the eagerneſs of a man who purſues his favourite occupation.

Cecilia half forgot her own anxieties and ſadneſs, in the concern which ſhe felt for this unfortunate and extraordinary young man. She wiſhed much to deviſe ſome means for drawing him from a life of ſuch hardſhip and obſcurity; but what to a man thus "jealous in honour," thus ſcrupulous in delicacy, could ſhe propoſe, without more riſk of offence, than probability of obliging? His account had, indeed, convinced her how much he ſtood in need of aſſiſtance, but it had ſhewn her no leſs how faſtidious he would be in receiving it.

Nor was ſhe wholly without fear that an earneſt ſolicitude to ſerve him, his youth, talents, and ſtriking manners conſidered, might occaſion even in himſelf a miſconſtruction of her motives, ſuch as ſhe already had given birth to in his forward and partial mother.

The preſent, therefore, all circumſtances weighed, ſeemed no ſeaſon for her liberality, which ſhe yet reſolved to exert the firſt moment it was un-oppoſed by propriety.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

A CONTEST.

THE reſt of the day was paſſed in diſcuſſing this adventure; but in the evening, Cecilia's intereſt in it was all ſunk, by the reception of the following letter from Mrs. Delvile.

To MISS BEVERLEY.

I grieve to interrupt the tranquility of a retirement ſo judiciouſly choſen, and I lament the neceſſity of again calling to trial the virtue of which the exertion, though ſo captivating, is ſo painful; but alas, my excellent young friend, we came not hither to enjoy, but to ſuffer; and happy only are thoſe whoſe ſufferings have neither by folly been ſought, nor by guilt been merited, but ariſing merely from the imperfection of humanity, have been reſiſted with fortitude, or endured with patience.

I am informed of your virtuous ſteadineſs, which correſponds with my expectations, while it excites my reſpect. All further conflict I had hoped to have ſaved you; and to the triumph of your goodneſs I had truſted for the recovery of your peace: but Mortimer has diſappointed me, and our work is ſtill unfiniſhed.

He avers that he is ſolemnly engaged to you, and in pleading to me his honour, he ſilences both expoſtulation and authority. From your own words alone will he acknowledge his diſmiſſion; and notwithſtanding my reluctance to impoſe upon you this taſk, I cannot ſilence or quiet him without making the requeſt.

For a purpoſe ſuch as this, can you, then, admit us? Can you bear with your own lips to confirm the irrevocable deciſion? You will feel, I am ſure, for the unfortunate Mortimer, and it was earneſtly my deſire to ſpare you the ſight of his affliction; yet ſuch is my confidence in your prudence, that ſince I find him bent upon ſeeing you, I am not without hope, that from witneſſing the greatneſs of your mind, the interview may rather calm than inflame him.

This propoſal you will take into conſideration, and if you are able, upon ſuch terms, to again meet my ſon, we will wait upon you together, where and when you will appoint; but if the gentleneſs of your nature will make the effort too ſevere for you, ſcruple not to decline it, for Mortimer, when he knows your pleaſure, will ſubmit to it as he ought.

Adieu, moſt amiable and but too lovely Cecilia; whatever you determine, be ſure of my concurrence, for nobly have you earned, and ever muſt you retain, the eſteem, the affection, and the gratitude of

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

"Alas

"Alas," cried Cecilia, "when ſhall I be at reſt? when ceaſe to be perſecuted by new conflicts! Oh, why muſt I ſo often, ſo cruelly, though ſo reluctantly, reject and reprove the man who of all men I wiſh to accept and to pleaſe!"

But yet, though repining at this hard neceſſity, ſhe heſitated not a moment in complying with Mrs. Delvile's requeſt, and immediately ſent an anſwer that ſhe would meet her the next morning at Mrs. Charlton's.

She then returned to the parlour, and apologized to Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott for the abruptneſs of her viſit, and the ſuddenneſs of her departure. Mr. Arnott heard her in ſilent dejection; and Mrs. Harrel uſed all the perſuaſion in her power to prevail with her to ſtay, her preſence being ſome relief to her ſolitude: but finding it ineffectual, ſhe earneſtly preſſed her to haſten her entrance into her own houſe, that their abſence might be ſhortened and their meeting more ſprightly.

Cecilia paſſed the night in planning her behaviour for the next day; ſhe found how much was expected from her by Mrs. Delvile, who had even exhorted her to decline the interview if doubtful of her own ſtrength. Delvile's firmneſs in inſiſting the refuſal ſhould come directly from herſelf, ſurpriſed, gratified and perplexed her in turn; ſhe had imagined, that from the moment of the diſcovery, he would implicitly have ſubmitted to the

award of a parent at once ſo reverenced and ſo beloved, and how he had ſummoned courage to contend with her ſhe could not conjecture: yet that courage and that contention aſtoniſhed not more than they ſoothed her, ſince, from her knowledge of his filial tenderneſs, ſhe conſidered them as the moſt indubitable proofs ſhe had yet received of the fervor and conſtancy of his regard for her. But would he, when ſhe had ratified the deciſion of his mother, forbear all further ſtruggle, and for ever yield up all pretenſions to her? this was the point upon which her uncertainty turned, and the ruling ſubject of her thoughts and meditation.

To be ſteady, however, herſelf, be his conduct what it might, was invariably her intention, and was all her ambition: yet earneſtly ſhe wiſhed the meeting over, for ſhe dreaded to ſee the ſorrow of Delvile, and ſhe dreaded ſtill more the ſuſceptibility of her own heart.

The next morning, to her great concern, Mr. Arnott was waiting in the hall when ſhe came down ſtairs, and ſo much grieved at her departure, that he handed her to the chaiſe without being able to ſpeak to her, and hardly heard her thanks and compliments, but by recollection after ſhe was gone.

She arrived at Mrs. Charlton's very early, and found her old friend in the ſame ſtate ſhe had

had left her. She communicated to her the purpoſe of her return, and begged ſhe would keep her grand-daughters up ſtairs, that the conference in the parlour might be uninterrupted and unheard.

She then made a forced and haſty breakfaſt, and went down to be ready to receive them. They came not till eleven o'clock, and the time of her waiting was paſſed in agonies of expectation.

At length they were announced, and at length they entered the room.

Cecilia, with her utmoſt efforts for courage, could hardly ſtand to receive them. They came in together, but Mrs. Delvile, advancing before her ſon, and endeavouring ſo to ſtand as to intercept his view of her, with the hope that in a few inſtants her emotion would be leſs viſible, ſaid, in the moſt ſoothing accents, "What honour Miſs Beverley does us by permitting this viſit! I ſhould have been ſorry to have left Suffolk without the ſatisfaction of again ſeeing you; and my ſon, ſenſible of the high reſpect he owes you, was moſt unwilling to be gone, before he had paid you his devoirs."

Cecilia courtſied; but depreſſed by the cruel taſk which awaited her, had no power to ſpeak; and Mrs. Delvile, finding ſhe ſtill trembled, made her ſit down, and drew a chair next to her.

Mean while Delvile, with an emotion far more violent, becauſe wholly unreſtrained, waited impatiently till the ceremonial of the reception was over, and then, approaching Cecilia, in a voice of perturbation and reſentment, ſaid, "In this preſence, at leaſt, I hope I may be heard; though my letters have been unanſwered, my viſits refuſed, though inexorably you have flown me—"

"Mortimer," interrupted Mrs. Delvile, "forget not that what I have told you is irrevocable; you now meet Miſs Beverley for no other purpoſe than to give and to receive a mutual releaſe of all tie or engagement with each other."

"Pardon me, madam," cried he, "this is a condition to which I have never aſſented. I come not to releaſe, but to claim her! I am hers, and hers wholly! I proteſt it in the face of the world! The time, therefore, is now paſt for the ſacrifice which you demand, ſince ſcarce are you more my mother, than I conſider her as my wife."

Cecilia, amazed at this dauntleſs declaration, now almoſt loſt her fear in her ſurpriſe; while Mrs. Delvile, with an air calm, though diſpleaſed, anſwered, "This is not a point to be at preſent diſcuſſed, and I had hoped you knew better what was due to your auditors. I only conſented to this interview as a mark of your reſpect for Miſs Beverley, to whom in propriety it belongs to break off *this* unfortunate connexion."

Cecilia,

Cecilia, who at this call could no longer be ſilent, now gathered fortitude to ſay, "Whatever tie or obligation may be ſuppoſed to depend upon me, I have already relinquiſhed; and I am now ready to declare—"

"That you wholly give me up?" interrupted Delvile, "is that what you would ſay:—Oh, how have I offended you? how have I merited a diſpleaſure that can draw upon me ſuch a ſentence?—Anſwer, ſpeak to me, Cecilia, what is it I have done?

"Nothing, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, confounded at this language in the preſence of his mother, "you have done nothing, but yet—"

"Yet what?—have you conceived to me an averſion? has any dreadful and horrible antipathy ſucceeded to your eſteem;—tell, tell me without diſguiſe, do you hate, do you abhor me?"

Cecilia ſighed, and turned away her head: and Mrs. Delvile indignantly exclaimed, "What madneſs and abſurdity! I ſcarce know you under the influence of ſuch irrational violence. Why will you interrupt Miſs Beverley in the only ſpeech you ought to hear from her? Why, at once, oppreſs her, and irritate me, by words of more paſſion than reaſon? Go on, charming girl, finiſh what ſo wiſely, ſo judiciouſly you were beginning, and then you ſhall be releaſed from this turbulent perſecution."

"No,

"No, madam, ſhe muſt not go on!" cried Delvile, "if ſhe does not utterly abhor me, I will not *ſuffer* her to go on;—Pardon, pardon me, Cecilia, but your too exquiſite delicacy is betraying not only my happineſs, but your own. Once more, therefore, I conjure you to hear me, and then if, deliberately and unbiaſſed, you renounce me, I will never more diſtreſs you by reſiſting your decree."

Cecilia, abaſhed and changing colour, was ſilent, and he proceeded.

"All that has paſt between us, the vows I have offered you of faith, conſtancy and affection, the conſent I obtained from you to be legally mine, the bond of ſettlement I have had drawn up, and the high honour you conferred upon me in ſuffering me to lead you to the altar,—all theſe particulars are already known to ſo many, that the leaſt reflection muſt convince you they will ſoon be concealed from none: tell me, then, if your own fame pleads not for me, and if the ſcruples which lead you to refuſe, by taking another direction, will not, with much more propriety, urge, nay enjoin you to accept me? You heſitate at leaſt,—O Miſs Beverley! I ſee in that heſitation—"

"Nothing, nothing!" cried ſhe, haſtily, and checking her riſing irreſolution; "there is nothing for you to ſee, but that every way

I now

I now turn I have rendered myſelf miſerable!"

"Mortimer," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, ſeized with terror as ſhe penetrated into the mental yielding of Cecilia, "you have now ſpoken to Miſs Beverley; and unwilling as I am to obtrude upon her our difference of ſentiment, it is neceſſary, ſince ſhe has heard you, that I, alſo, ſhould claim her attention."

"Firſt let her ſpeak!" cried Delvile, who in her apparent wavering built new hopes, "firſt let her anſwer what ſhe has already deigned to liſten to."

"No, firſt let her hear!" cried Mrs. Delvile, "for ſo only can ſhe judge what anſwer will reflect upon her moſt honour."

Then, ſolemnly turning to Cecilia, ſhe continued: "You ſee here, Miſs Beverley, a young man who paſſionately adores you, and who forgets in his adoration, friends, family, and connections, the opinions in which he has been educated, the honour of his houſe, his own former views, and all his primitive ſenſe of duty, both public and private! — A paſſion built on ſuch a defalcation of principle renders him unworthy your acceptance; and not more ignoble for him would be a union which would blot his name from the injured ſtock whence he ſprung, than indelicate for you, who upon ſuch terms ought to deſpiſe him."

"Heavens,

"Heavens, madam," exclaimed Delvile, "what a ſpeech!"

"O never," cried Cecilia, riſing, "may I hear ſuch another! Indeed, madam, there is no occaſion to probe me ſo deeply, for I would not now enter into your family, for all that the whole world could offer me!"

"At length, then, madam," cried Delvile, turning reproachfully to his mother, "are you ſatisfied? is your purpoſe now anſwered? and is the dagger you have transfixed in my heart ſunk deep enough to appeaſe you?"

"O could I draw it out," cried Mrs. Delvile, "and leave upon it no ſtain of ignominy, with what joy ſhould my own boſom receive it, to heal the wound I have moſt compulſatorily inflicted!—Were this excellent young creature portionleſs, I would not heſitate in giving my conſent; every claim of intereſt would be overbalanced by her virtues, and I would not grieve to ſee you poor, where ſo conſcious you were happy; but here to concede, would annihilate every hope with which hitherto I have looked up to my ſon."

"Let us now, then, madam," ſaid Cecilia, "break up this conference. I have ſpoken, I have heard, the decree is paſt, and therefore,—"

"You are indeed an angel!" cried Mrs. Delvile, riſing and embracing her; "and never can I reproach my ſon with what has paſt, when I conſider for what an object the ſacrifice

ſacrifice was planned. *You* cannot be unhappy, you have purchaſed peace by the exerciſe of virtue, and the cloſe of every day will bring to you a reward, in the ſweets of a ſelf-approving mind.—But we will part, ſince you think it right; I do wrong to occaſion any delay."

"No, we will *not* part!" cried Delvile, with encreaſing vehemence, "if you force me, madam, from her, you will drive me to diſtraction! What is there in this world that can offer me a recompence? And what can pride even to the proudeſt afford as an equivalent? Her perfections you acknowledge, her greatneſs of mind is like your own; ſhe has generouſly given me her heart.—Oh, ſacred and faſcinating charge! Shall I, after ſuch a depoſite, conſent to an eternal ſeparation? Repeal, repeal your ſentence, my Cecilia! let us live to ourſelves and our conſciences, and leave the vain prejudices of the world to thoſe who can be paid by them for the loſs of all beſides!"

"Is this conflict, then," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "to laſt for ever? Oh end it, Mortimer, finiſh it, and make me happy! ſhe is juſt, and will forgive you; ſhe is noble-minded, and will honour you. Fly, then, at this critical moment, for in flight alone is your ſafety; and then will your father ſee the ſon of his hopes, and then ſhall the fond bleſſings of your idoliz-

ing

ing mother ſoothe all your affliction, and ſoften all your regret!"

"Oh, madam!" cried Delvile, "for mercy, for humanity, forbear this cruel ſupplication!"

"Nay, more than ſupplication, you have my commands; commands you have never yet diſputed, and miſery, ten-fold miſery, will follow their diſobedience. Hear me, Mortimer, for I ſpeak prophetically; I know your heart, I know it to be formed for rectitude and duty, or deſtined by their neglect to repentance and horror."

Delvile, ſtruck by theſe words, turned ſuddenly from them both, and in gloomy deſpondence walked to the other end of the room. Mrs. Delvile perceived the moment of her power, and determined to purſue the blow: taking, therefore, the hand of Cecilia, while her eyes ſparkled with the animation of reviving hope, "See," ſhe cried, pointing to her ſon, "ſee if I am deceived! can he bear even the ſuggeſtion of future contrition? Think you when it falls upon him, he will ſupport it better? No; he will ſink under it. And you, pure as you are of mind, and ſtedfaſt in principle, what would your chance be of happineſs with a man who never erring till he knew you, could never look at you without regret, be his fondneſs what it might?"

"Oh, madam," cried the greatly ſhocked Cecilia, "let him, then, ſee me no more!—*take*, take him all to yourſelf! forgive, con-

ſole

ſole him! I will not have the miſery of involving him in repentance, nor of incurring the reproaches of the mother he ſo much reverences!"

"Exalted creature!" cried Mrs. Delvile; "tenderneſs ſuch as this would confer honour upon a monarch." Then, calling out exultingly to her ſon, "See," ſhe added, "how greatly a woman can act, when ſtimulated by generoſity and a juſt ſenſe of duty! Follow then, at leaſt, the example you ought to have led, and deſerve my eſteem and love, or be content to forego them."

"And can I only deſerve them," ſaid Delvile, in a tone of the deepeſt anguiſh, "by a compliance to which not merely my happineſs, but my reaſon muſt be ſacrificed? What honour do I injure that is not factitious? What evil threatens our union, that is not imaginary? In the general commerce of the world it may be right to yield to its prejudices, but in matters of ſerious importance, it is weakneſs to be ſhackled by ſcruples ſo frivolous, and it is cowardly to be governed by the cuſtoms we condemn. Religion and the laws of our country ſhould then alone be conſulted, and where thoſe are neither oppoſed nor infringed, we ſhould hold ourſelves ſuperior to all other conſiderations."

"Miſtaken notions!" ſaid Mrs. Delvile; "and how long do you flatter yourſelf this independent happineſs would endure? How long

long could you live contented by mere ſelf-gratification, in defiance of the cenſure of mankind, the renunciation of your family, and the curſes of your father?"

"The curſes of my father?" repeated he, ſtarting and ſhuddering, "O no, he could never be ſo barbarous!"

"He could," ſaid ſhe, ſteadily, "nor do I doubt but he would. If now, however, you are affected by the proſpect of his diſclaiming you, think but what you will feel when firſt forbid to appear before either of us! and think of your remorſe for involving Miſs Beverley in ſuch diſgrace!"

"O ſpeak not ſuch words!" cried he, with agonizing earneſtneſs, "to diſgrace her,—to be baniſhed by you,—preſent not, I conjure you, ſuch ſcenes to my imagination!"

"Yet would they be unavoidable," continued ſhe; "nor have I ſaid to you all; blinded as you now are by paſſion, your nobler feelings are only obſcured, not extirpated; think, then, how they will all riſe in revenge of your inſulted dignity, when your name becomes a ſtranger to your ears, and you are firſt ſaluted by one ſo meanly adopted!—"

"Hold, hold, madam," interrupted he, "this is more than I can bear!"

"Heavens!" ſtill continued ſhe, diſregarding his intreaty, "what in the univerſe can pay you for that firſt moment of indignity! Think of it well ere you proceed, and antici-

anticipate your ſenſations, leſt the ſhock ſhould wholly overcome you. How will the blood of your wronged anceſtors riſe into your guilty cheeks, and how will your heart throb with ſecret ſhame and reproach, when wiſhed joy upon your marriage by the name of Mr. *Beverley!*"

Delvile, ſtung to the ſoul, attempted not any anſwer, but walked about the room in the utmoſt diſorder of mind. Cecilia would have retired, but feared irritating him to ſome extravagance; and Mrs. Delvile, looking after him, added "For myſelf, I would ſtill ſee, for I ſhould pity your wife,—but NEVER would I behold my ſon when ſunk into an object of compaſſion!"

"It ſhall not be!" cried he, in a tranſport of rage; "ceaſe, ceaſe to diſtract me! — be content, madam, —you have conquered!"

"Then you are my ſon!" cried ſhe, rapturouſly embracing him; "now I know again my Mortimer! now I ſee the fair promiſe of his upright youth, and the flattering completion of my maternal expectations!"

Cecilia, finding all thus concluded, deſired nothing ſo much as to congratulate them on their reconciliation; but having only ſaid, "Let *me* too,—" her voice failed her, ſhe ſtopt ſhort, and hoping ſhe had been unheard, would have glided out of the room.

But Delvile, penetrated and tortured, yet delighted at this ſenſibility, broke from his mother,

But the heroiſm of Cecilia, in loſing its object, loſt its force; ſhe ſighed, ſhe could not ſpeak; tears guſhed into her eyes, and kiſſing Mrs. Delvile's hand with a look that ſhewed her inability to converſe with her, ſhe haſtened, though ſcarce able to ſupport herſelf, away, with intention to ſhut herſelf up in her own apartment: and Mrs. Delvile, who perceived that her utmoſt fortitude was exhauſted, oppoſed not her going, and wiſely forbore to encreaſe her emotion, by following her even with her bleſſings.

But when ſhe came into the hall, ſhe ſtarted, and could proceed no farther; for there ſhe beheld Delvile, who in too great agony to be ſeen, had ſtopt to recover ſome compoſure before he quitted the houſe.

At the firſt ſound of an opening door, he was haſtily eſcaping; but perceiving Cecilia, and diſcerning her ſituation, he more haſtily turned back, ſaying, "Is it poſſible? — To *me* were you coming?"

She ſhook her head, and made a motion with her hand to ſay no, and would then have gone on.

"You are weeping!" cried he, "you are pale! — Oh, Miſs Beverley! is this your happineſs?"

"I am very well,—" cried ſhe, not knowing what ſhe anſwered, "I am quite well,— pray go, — I am very — " her words died away inarticulated.

"Oh,

"Oh, what a voice is that!" exclaimed he, "it pierces my very ſoul!"

Mrs. Delvile now came to the parlour door, and looked aghaſt at the ſituation in which ſhe ſaw them: Cecilia again moved on, and reached the ſtairs, but tottered, and was obliged to cling to the baniſters.

"O ſuffer me to ſupport you," cried he; "you are not able to ſtand—whither is it you would go?"

"Any where,—I don't know—" anſwered ſhe, in faultering accents, "but if you would leave me, I ſhould be well."

And, turning from him, ſhe walked again towards the parlour, finding by her ſhaking frame, the impoſſibility of getting unaided up the ſtairs.

"Give me your hand, my love," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, cruelly alarmed by this return; and the moment they re-entered the parlour, ſhe ſaid impatiently to her ſon, "Mortimer, why are you not gone?"

He heard her not, however; his whole attention was upon Cecilia, who, ſinking into a chair, hid her face againſt Mrs. Delvile: but, reviving in a few moments, and bluſhing at the weakneſs ſhe had betrayed, ſhe raiſed her head, and, with an aſſumed ſerenity, ſaid "I am better,—much better,——I was rather ſick,—but it is over; and now, if you will excuſe me, I will go to my own room."

She

She then aroſe, but her knees trembled, and her head was giddy, and again ſeating herſelf, ſhe forced a faint ſmile, and ſaid, "Perhaps I had better keep quiet."

"Can I bear this!" cried Delvile, "no, it ſhakes all my reſolution!——loveliеſt and moſt beloved Cecilia! forgive my raſh declaration, which I here retract and forſwear, and which no falſe pride, no worthleſs vanity ſhall again ſurpriſe from me!——raiſe, then, your eyes——"

"Hot-headed young man!" interrupted Mrs. Delvile, with an air of haughty diſpleaſure, "if you cannot be rational, at leaſt be ſilent, Miſs Beverley, we will both leave him."

Shame, and her own earneſtneſs, now reſtored ſome ſtrength to Cecilia, who read with terror in the looks of Mrs. Delvile the paſſions with which ſhe was agitated, and inſtantly obeyed her by riſing; but her ſon, who inherited a portion of her own ſpirit, ruſhed between them both and the door, and exclaimed "Stay, madam, ſtay! I cannot let you go: I ſee your intention, I ſee your dreadful purpoſe; you will work upon the feelings of Miſs Beverley, you will extort from her a promiſe to ſee me no more!"

"Oppoſe not my paſſing!" cried Mrs. Delvile, whoſe voice, face, and manner, ſpoke the encreaſing diſturbance of her ſoul; "I have but too long talked to you in vain; I

muſt now take ſome better method for the ſecurity of the honour of my family."

This moment appeared to Delvile deciſive; and caſting off in deſperation all timidity and reſtraint, he ſuddenly ſprang forward, and ſnatching the hand of Cecilia from his mother, he exclaimed, "I cannot, I will not give her up! — nor now, madam, nor ever! — I proteſt it moſt ſolemnly! I affirm it by my beſt hopes! I ſwear it by all that I hold ſacred!"

Grief and horror next to frenzy at a diſappointment thus unexpected, and thus peremptory, roſe in the face of Mrs. Delvile, who, ſtriking her hand upon her forehead, cried, "My brain is on fire!" and ruſhed out of the room.

Cecilia had now no difficulty to diſengage herſelf from Delvile, who, ſhocked at the exclamation, and confounded by the ſudden departure of his mother, haſtened eagerly to purſue her: ſhe had only flown into the next parlour; but, upon following her thither, what was his dread and his alarm, when he ſaw her extended upon the floor, her face, hands, and neck all covered with blood! "Great Heaven!" he exclaimed, proſtrating himſelf by her ſide, "what is it you have done! — where are you wounded? — what direful curſe have you denounced againſt your ſon?"

Not able to ſpeak, ſhe angrily ſhook her head, and indignantly made a motion with

her hand, that commanded him from her ſight.

Cecilia, who had followed, though half dead with terror, had yet the preſence of mind to ring the bell. A ſervant came immediately; and Delvile, ſtarting up from his mother, ordered him to fetch the firſt ſurgeon or phyſician he could find.

The alarm now brought the reſt of the ſervants into the room, and Mrs. Delvile ſuffered herſelf to be raiſed from the ground, and ſeated in a chair; ſhe was ſtill ſilent, but ſhewed a diſguſt to any aſſiſtance from her ſon, that made him deliver her into the hands of the ſervants, while, in ſpeechleſs agony, he only looked on and watched her.

Neither did Cecilia, though forgetting her own ſorrow, and no longer ſenſible of perſonal weakneſs, venture to approach her: uncertain what had happened, ſhe yet conſidered herſelf as the ultimate cauſe of this dreadful ſcene, and feared to riſk the effect of the ſmalleſt additional emotion.

The ſervant returned with a ſurgeon in a few minutes: Cecilia, unable to wait and hear what he would ſay, glided haſtily out of the room; and Delvile, in ſtill greater agitation, followed her quick into the next parlour; but having eagerly advanced to ſpeak to her, he turned precipitately about, and hurrying into the hall, walked in haſty ſteps up and down

it, without courage to enquire what was paſſing.

At length the ſurgeon came out: Delvile flew to him, and ſtopt him, but could aſk no queſtion. His countenance, however, rendered words unneceſſary; the ſurgeon underſtood him, and ſaid, "The lady will do very well; ſhe has burſt a blood veſſel, but I think it will be of no conſequence. She muſt be kept quiet and eaſy, and upon no account ſuffered to talk, or to uſe any exertion."

Delvile now let him go, and flew himſelf into a corner to return thanks to heaven that the evil, however great, was leſs than he had at firſt apprehended. He then went into the parlour to Cecilia, eagerly calling out, "Heaven be praiſed, my mother has not voluntarily curſed me!"

"O now then," cried Cecilia, "once more make her bleſs you! the violence of her agitation has already almoſt deſtroyed her, and her frame is too weak for this ſtruggle of contending paſſions;—go to her, then, and calm the tumult of her ſpirits, by acquieſcing wholly in her will, and being to her again the ſon ſhe thinks ſhe has loſt!"

"Alas!" ſaid he, in a tone of the deepeſt dejection; "I have been preparing myſelf for that purpoſe, and waited but your commands to finally determine me."

"Let us both go to her inſtantly," ſaid Cecilia; the leaſt delay may be fatal."

She

She now led the way, and approaching Mrs. Delvile, who, faint and weak, was ſeated upon an arm-chair, and reſting her head upon the ſhoulder of a maid ſervant, ſaid, "Lean, deareſt madam, upon *me*, and ſpeak not, but hear us!"

She then took the place of the maid, and deſired her and the other ſervants to go out of the room. Delvile advanced, but his mother's eye, recovering, at his ſight, its wonted fire, darted upon him a glance of ſuch diſpleaſure, that, ſhuddering with the apprehenſion of inflaming again thoſe paſſions which threatened her deſtruction, he haſtily ſunk on one knee, and abruptly exclaimed, "Look at me with leſs abhorrence, for I come but to reſign myſelf to your will."

"Mine alſo," cried Cecilia, "that will ſhall be; you need not ſpeak it, we know it, and here ſolemnly we promiſe that we will ſeparate for ever."

"Revive, then, my mother," ſaid Delvile, "rely upon our plighted honours, and think only of your health, for your ſon will never more offend you."

Mrs. Delvile, much ſurpriſed, and ſtrongly affected, held out her hand to him, with a look of mingled compaſſion and obligation, and dropping her head upon the boſom of Cecilia, who with her other arm ſhe preſſed towards her, ſhe burſt into an agony of tears.

"Go, go, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, cruelly alarmed, "you have ſaid all that is neceſſary; leave Mrs. Delvile now, and ſhe will be more compoſed."

Delvile inſtantly obeyed, and then his mother, whoſe mouth ſtill continued to fill with blood, though it guſhed not from her with the violence it had begun, was prevailed upon by the prayers of Cecilia to conſent to be conveyed into her room; and, as her immediate removal to another houſe might be dangerous, ſhe complied alſo, though very reluctantly, with her urgent entreaties, that ſhe would take entire poſſeſſion of it till the next day.

This point gained, Cecilia left her, to communicate what had paſt to Mrs. Charlton, but was told by one of the ſervants, that Mr. Delvile begged firſt to ſpeak with her in the next room.

She heſitated for a moment whether to grant this requeſt; but recollecting it was right to acquaint him with his mother's intention of ſtaying all night, ſhe went to him.

"How indulgent you are," cried he, in a melancholy voice as ſhe opened the door; "I am now going poſt to Dr. Lyſter, whom I ſhall entreat to come hither inſtantly; but I am fearful of again diſturbing my mother, and muſt therefore rely upou you to acquaint her what is become of me."

"Moſt

"Moſt certainly; I have begged her to remain here to-night, and I hope I ſhall prevail with her to continue with me till Dr. Lyſter's arrival; after which ſhe will, doubtleſs, be guided either in ſtaying longer, or removing elſewhere by his advice."

"You are all goodneſs," ſaid he, with a deep ſigh; "and how I ſhall ſupport—but I mean not to return hither, at leaſt not to this houſe,—unleſs, indeed, Dr. Lyſter's account ſhould be alarming. I leave my mother, therefore, to your kindneſs, and only hope, only entreat, that your own health,—your own peace of mind—neither by attendance upon her,—by anxiety,—by pity for her ſon——"

He ſtopt, and ſeemed gaſping for breath; Cecilia turned from him to hide her emotion, and he proceeded with a rapidity of ſpeech that ſhewed his terror of continuing with her any longer, and his ſtruggle with himſelf to be gone: "The promiſe you have made in both our names to my mother, I ſhall hold myſelf bound to obſerve. I ſee, indeed, that her reaſon or her life would fall the ſacrifice of further oppoſition: of myſelf, therefore, it is no longer time to think.—I take of you no leave—I cannot! yet I would fain tell you the high reverence—but it is better to ſay nothing——"

"Much better," cried Cecilia, with a forced and faint ſmile; "loſe not, therefore, an inſtant, but haſten to this good Dr. Lyſter."

"I will," anſwered he, going to the door; but there, ſtopping and turning round, "one thing I ſhould yet," he added, "wiſh to ſay: I have been impetuous, violent, unreaſonable, —with ſhame and with regret I recollect how impetuous, and how unreaſonable: I have perſecuted, where I ought in ſilence to have ſubmitted; I have reproached, where I ought in candour to have approved; and in the vehemence with which I have purſued you, I have cenſured that very dignity of conduct which has been the baſis of my admiration, my eſteem, my devotion! but never can I forget, and never without freſh wonder remember, the ſweetneſs with which you have borne with me, even when moſt I offended you.—For this impatience, this violence, this inconſiſtency, I now moſt ſincerely beg your pardon; and if, before I go, you could ſo far condeſcend as to pronounce my forgiveneſs, with a lighter heart, I think, I ſhould quit you."

"Do not talk of forgiveneſs," ſaid Cecilia, "you have never offended me; I always knew—always was ſure—always imputed—" ſhe ſtopt, unable to proceed.

Deeply penetrated by the apparent diſtreſs, he with difficulty reſtrained himſelf from falling at her feet; but after a moment's pauſe and recollection, he ſaid, "I underſtand the generous indulgence you have ſhewn me, an indulgence I ſhall ever revere, and ever grieve

to

to have abuſed. I aſk you not to remember me,—far, far happier do I wiſh you than ſuch a remembrance could make you; but I will pain the humanity of your diſpoſition no longer. You will tell my mother—but no matter!—Heaven preſerve you, my angelic Cecilia!—Miſs Beverley, I mean,—Heaven guide, protect, and bleſs you! And ſhould I ſee you no more, ſhould this be the laſt ſad moment——"

He pauſed, but preſently recovering himſelf, added, "May I hear, at leaſt, of your tranquility, for that alone can have any chance to quiet or repreſs the anguiſh I feel here!"

He then abruptly retreated, and ran out of the houſe.

Cecilia for a while remained almoſt ſtupified with ſorrow; ſhe forgot Mrs. Delvile, ſhe forgot Mrs. Charlton, ſhe forgot her own deſign of apologizing to one, or aſſiſting the other; ſhe continued in the poſture in which he had left her, quite without motion, and almoſt without ſenſibility.

CHAP. III.

A Message.

FROM this lethargy of ſadneſs Cecilia was ſoon, however, awakened by the return of the ſurgeon, who had brought with him a phyſician to conſult upon Mrs. Delvile's ſituation. Terror for the mother once more drove the ſon from her thoughts, and ſhe waited with the moſt apprehenſive impatience to hear the reſult of the conſultation. The phyſician declined giving any poſitive opinion, but, having written a preſcription, only repeated the injunction of the ſurgeon, that ſhe ſhould be kept extremely quiet, and on no account be ſuffered to talk.

Cecilia, though ſhocked and frightened at the occaſion, was yet by no means ſorry at an order which thus precluded all converſation; unfitted for it by her own miſery, ſhe was glad to be relieved from all neceſſity of impoſing upon herſelf, the irkſome taſk of finding ſubjects for diſcourſe to which ſhe was wholly indifferent, while obliged with ſedulity to avoid thoſe by which alone her mind was occupied.

The worthy Mrs. Charlton heard the events of the morning with the utmoſt concern, but charged

charged her grand-daughters to aſſiſt her young friend in doing the honours of her houſe to Mrs. Delvile, while ſhe ordered another apartment to be prepared for Cecilia, to whom ſhe adminiſtered all the conſolation her friendly zeal could ſuggeſt.

Cecilia, however unhappy, had too juſt a way of thinking to indulge in ſelfiſh grief, where occaſion called her to action for the benefit of others: ſcarce a moment, therefore, now did ſhe allow to ſorrow and herſelf, but aſſiduouſly beſtowed the whole of her time upon her two ſick friends, dividing her attention according to their own deſire or convenience, without conſulting or regarding any choice of her own. Choice, indeed, ſhe had none; ſhe loved Mrs. Charlton, ſhe revered Mrs. Delvile; the warmeſt wiſh with which her heart glowed, was the recovery of both, but too deep was her affliction to receive pleaſure from either.

Two days paſſed thus, during which the conſtancy of her attendance, which at another time would have fatigued her, proved the only relief ſhe was capable of receiving. Mrs. Delvile was evidently affected by her vigilant tenderneſs, but ſeemed equally deſirous with herſelf to make uſe of the prohibition to ſpeech as an excuſe for uninterrupted ſilence. She enquired not even after her ſon, though the eagerneſs of her look towards the door, whenever it was opened, ſhewed either a hope,

or an apprehenſion that he might enter. Cecilia wiſhed to tell her whither he was gone, but dreaded truſting her voice with his name; and their ſilence, after a while, ſeemed ſo much by mutual conſent, that ſhe had ſoon as little courage as ſhe had inclination to break it.

The arrival of Dr. Lyſter gave her much ſatisfaction, for upon him reſted her hopes of Mrs. Delvile's re-eſtabliſhment. He ſent for her down ſtairs, to enquire whether he was expected; and hearing that he was not, deſired her to announce him, as the ſmalleſt emotion might do miſchief.

She returned up ſtairs, and after a ſhort preparation, ſaid, "Your favourite Dr. Lyſter, madam, is come, and I ſhall be much the happier for having you under his care."

"Dr. Lyſter!" cried ſhe, "who ſent for him?"

"I believe—I fancy—Mr. Delvile fetched him."

"My ſon;—is he here, then?"

"No,—he went, the moment he left you, for Dr. Lyſter,—and Dr. Lyſter is come by himſelf."

"Does he write to you?"

"No, indeed!—he writes not—he comes not—deareſt madam be ſatisfied, he will do neither to *me* ever more?"

"Exemplary young man!" cried ſhe, in a voice hardly audible, "how great is his loſs!

loſs!—unhappy Mortimer!—ill-fated, and ill-rewarded!"

She ſighed, and ſaid no more; but this ſhort converſation, the only one which had paſſed between them ſince her illneſs, agitated her ſo much, that Dr. Lyſter, who now came up ſtairs, found her in a ſtate of trembling and weakneſs that both alarmed and ſurpriſed him. Cecilia, glad of an opportunity to be gone, left the room, and ſent, by Dr. Lyſter's deſire, for the phyſician and ſurgeon who had already attended.

After they had been ſome time with their patient, they retired to a conſultation, and when it was over, Dr. Lyſter waited upon Cecilia in the parlour, and aſſured her he had no apprehenſion of danger for Mrs. Delvile: "Though, for another week, he added, I would have her continue *your* patient, as ſhe is not yet fit to be removed. But pray mind that ſhe is kept quiet; let nobody go near her, not even her own ſon. By the way he is waiting for me at the inn, ſo I'll juſt ſpeak again to his mother, and be gone."

Cecilia was well pleaſed by this accidental information, to learn both the anxiety of Delvile for his mother, and the ſteadineſs of his forbearance for himſelf. When Dr. Lyſter came down ſtairs again, "I ſhall ſtay," he ſaid, 'till to-morrow, but I hope ſhe will be able in another week to get to Briſtol. In the mean time I ſhall leave her, I ſee, with an excellent

cellent nurſe. But, my good young lady, in your care of her, don't neglect yourſelf; I am not quite pleaſed with your looks, though it is but an old faſhioned ſpeech to tell you ſo.—What have you been doing to yourſelf?"

"Nothing;" ſaid ſhe, a little embarraſſed, "but had you not better have ſome tea?"

"Why, yes, I think I had;—but what ſhall I do with my young man?"

Cecilia underſtood the hint, but coloured, and made no anſwer.

"He is waiting for me," he continued, "at the inn; however, I never yet knew the young man I would prefer to a young woman, ſo if you will give me ſome tea here, I ſhall certainly jilt him."

Cecilia inſtantly rang the bell, and ordered tea.

"Well now," ſaid he, "remember the ſin of this breach of appointment lies wholly at your door. I ſhall tell him you laid violent hands on me; and if that is not enough to excuſe me, I ſhall deſire he will try whether he could be more of a ſtoic with you himſelf."

"I think I muſt *un*order the tea," ſaid ſhe, with what gaiety ſhe could aſſume, "if I am to be reſponſible for any miſchief from your drinking it."

"No, no, you ſha'nt be off now; but pray would it be quite out of rule for you to ſend and aſk him to come to us?"

"Why

"Why I believe—I think—" ſaid ſhe, ſtammering, "it's very likely he may be engaged."

"Well, well, I don't mean to propoſe any violent incongruity. You muſt excuſe my blundering; I underſtand but little of the *etiquette* of young ladies. 'Tis a ſcience too intricate to be learned without more ſtudy than we plodding men of buſineſs can well ſpare time for. However, when I have done *writing* preſcriptions, I will ſet about *reading* them, provided you will be my inſtructreſs."

Cecilia, though aſhamed of a charge in which prudery and affectation were implied, was compelled to ſubmit to it, as either to ſend for Delvile, or explain her objections, was equally impoſſible. The Miſs Charltons therefore, joined them, and they went to tea.

Juſt as they had done, a note was delivered to Dr. Lyſter; "See here," cried he, when he had read it, "what a fine thing it is to be a *young* man! Why now, Mr. Mortimer underſtands as much of all this *etiquette* as you ladies do yourſelves; for he only writes a note even to aſk how his mother does."

He then put it into Cecilia's hand.

To Dr. Lyster.

TELL me, my dear Sir, how you have found my mother? I am uneaſy at your long ſtay,

ſtay, and engaged with my friend Biddulph, or I ſhould have followed you in perſon.

M. D.

"So you ſee," continued the doctor, "I need not do pennance for engaging myſelf to *you*, when this young gentleman can find ſuch good entertainment for himſelf."

Cecilia, who well knew the honourable motive of Delvile's engagement, with difficulty forbore ſpeaking in his vindication. Dr. Lyſter immediately began an anſwer, but before he had finiſhed it, called out, "Now as I am told you are a very good young woman, I think you can do no leſs than aſſiſt me to puniſh this gay ſpark, for playing the *macaroni*, when he ought to viſit his ſick mother."

Cecilia, much hurt for Delvile, and much confuſed for herſelf looked abaſhed, but knew not what to anſwer.

"My ſcheme," continued the doctor, "is to tell him, that as he has found one engagement for tea, he may find another for ſupper; but that as to me, I am better diſpoſed of, for you inſiſt upon keeping me to yourſelf. Come, what ſays *etiquette?* may I treat myſelf with this puff?"

"Certainly," ſaid Cecilia, endeavouring to look pleaſed, "if you will favour us with your company, Miſs Charltons and myſelf will think the *puffing* ſhould rather be ours than yours."

"That

"That then," ſaid the doctor, "will not anſwer my purpoſe, for I mean the puff to be my own, or how do I puniſh him? So, ſuppoſe I tell him I ſhall not only ſup with three young ladies, but be invited to a tête-à-tête with one of them into the bargain?"

The young ladies only laughed, and the doctor finiſhed his note, and ſent it away; and then, turning gaily to Cecilia, "Come," he ſaid, "why don't you give me this invitation? ſurely you don't mean to make me guilty of perjury?"

Cecilia, but little diſpoſed for pleaſantry, would gladly now have dropped the ſubject; but Dr. Lyſter, turning to the Miſs Charltons, ſaid, "Young ladies, I call you both to witneſs if this is not very bad uſage: this young woman has connived at my writing a downright falſehood, and all the time took me in to believe it was a truth. The only way I can think of to cure her of ſuch frolics, is for both of you to leave us together, and ſo make her keep her word whether ſhe will or no."

The Miſs Charltons took the hint, and went away; while Cecilia, who had not at all ſuſpected he meant ſeriouſly to ſpeak with her, remained extremely perplexed to think what he had to ſay.

"Mrs. Delvile," cried he, continuing the ſame air of eaſy good humour, "though I allowed her not to ſpeak to me above twenty words, took up near ten of them to tell me that

that you had behaved to her like an angel. Why ſo ſhe ought, cried I; what elſe was ſhe ſent for here to look ſo like one? I charged her, therefore, to take all that as a thing of courſe: and to prove that I really think what I ſay, I am now going to make a trial of you, that, if you are any thing leſs, will induce you to order ſome of your men to drive me into the ſtreet. The truth is, I have had a little commiſſion given me, which in the firſt place I know not how to introduce, and which, in the ſecond, as far as I can judge, appears to be abſolutely ſuperfluous."

Cecilia now felt uneaſy and alarmed, and begged him to explain himſelf. He then dropped the levity with which he had begun the diſcourſe, and after a grave, yet gentle preparation, expreſſive of his unwillingneſs to diſtreſs her, and his firm perſuaſion of her uncommon worthineſs, he acquainted her that he was no ſtranger to her ſituation with reſpect to the Delvile family.

"Good God!" cried ſhe, bluſhing and much amazed; "and who—"

"I knew it," ſaid he, "from the moment I attended Mr. Mortimer in his illneſs at Delvile Caſtle. He could not conceal from me that the ſeat of his diſorder was his mind; and I could not know that, without readily conjecturing the cauſe, when I ſaw who was his father's gueſt, and when I knew what was his father's character. He found he was betrayed

to

to me, and upon my adviſing a journey, he underſtood me properly. His openneſs to counſel, and the manly firmneſs with which he behaved in quitting you, made me hope the danger was blown over. But laſt week, when I was at the Caſtle, where I have for ſome time attended Mr. Delvile, who has had a ſevere fit of the gout, I found him in an agitation of ſpirits that made me apprehend it would be thrown into his ſtomach. I deſired Mrs. Delvile to uſe her influence to calm him; but ſhe was herſelf in ſtill greater emotion, and acquainting me ſhe was obliged to leave him, deſired I would ſpend with him every moment in my power. I have therefore almoſt lived at the Caſtle during her abſence, and, in the courſe of our many converſations, he has acknowledged to me the uneaſineſs under which he laboured, from the intelligence concerning his ſon, which he had juſt received."

Cecilia wiſhed here to enquire *how* received, and from whom, but had not the courage, and therefore he proceeded.

"I was ſtill with the father when Mr. Mortimer arrived poſt at my houſe to fetch me hither. I was ſent for home; he informed me of his errand without diſguiſe, for he knew I was well acquainted with the original ſecret whence all the evil aroſe. I told him my diſtreſs in what manner to leave his father; and he was extremely ſhocked himſelf when acquainted with his ſituation. We agreed that

it

it would be vain to conceal from him the indiſpoſition of Mrs. Delvile, which the delay of her return, and a thouſand other accidents, might in ſome unfortunate way make known to him. He commiſſioned me, therefore, to break it to him, that he might conſent to my journey, and at the ſame time to quiet his own mind, by aſſuring him all he had apprehended was wholly at an end."

He ſtopt, and looked to ſee how Cecilia bore theſe words.

"It *is* all at an end, Sir;" ſaid ſhe, with firmneſs; "but I have not yet heard your commiſſion; what, and from whom is that?"

"I am thoroughly ſatisfied it is unneceſſary;" he anſwered, "ſince the young man can but ſubmit, and you can but give him up."

"But ſtill, if there is a meſſage, it is fit I ſhould hear it."

"If you chooſe it, ſo it is. I told Mr. Delvile whither I was coming, and I repeated to him his ſon's aſſurances. He was relieved, but not ſatisfied; he would not ſee him, and gave me for him a prohibition of extreme ſeverity,——and to *you* he bid me ſay—"

"From *him*, then, is my meſſage?" cried Cecilia, half frightened, and much diſappointed.

"Yes,

"Yes," ſaid he, underſtanding her immediately, "for the ſon, after giving me his firſt account, had the wiſdom and forbearance not once to mention you."

"I am very glad," ſaid ſhe, with a mixture of admiration and regret, "to hear it. But what, Sir, ſaid Mr. Delvile?"

"He bid me tell you that either *he*, or *you* muſt ſee his ſon never more."

"It was indeed unneceſſary," cried ſhe, colouring with reſentment, "to ſend me ſuch a meſſage. I meant not to ſee him again, he meant not to deſire it. I return him, however, no anſwer, and I will make him no promiſe, to Mrs. Delvile alone I hold myſelf bound; to him, ſend what meſſages he may, I ſhall always hold myſelf free. But believe me, Dr. Lyſter, if with his name, his ſon had inherited his character, his deſire of our ſeparation would be feeble, and trifling, compared with my own!"

"I am ſorry, my good young lady," ſaid he, "to have given you this diſturbance; yet I admire your ſpirit, and doubt not but it will enable you to forget any little diſappointment you may have ſuffered. And what, after all, have you to regret? Mortimer Delvile is, indeed, a young man that any woman might wiſh to attach; but every woman cannot have him, and you, of all women, have leaſt reaſon to repine in miſſing

him, for ſcarcely is there another man you may not chooſe or reject at your pleaſure."

Little as was the conſolation Cecilia could draw from this ſpeech, ſhe was ſenſible it became not her ſituation to make complaints, and therefore, to end the converſation, ſhe propoſed calling in the Miſs Charltons.

"No, no," ſaid he, "I muſt ſtep up again to Mrs. Delvile, and then be gone. To-morrow morning I ſhall but call to ſee how ſhe is, and leave ſome directions, and ſet off. Mr. Mortimer Delvile accompanies me back: but he means to return hither in a week, in order to travel with his mother to Briſtol. Mean time, I purpoſe to bring about a reconciliation between him and his father, whoſe prejudices are more intractable than any man's I ever met with."

"It will be ſtrange indeed," ſaid Cecilia, "ſhould a reconciliation *now* be difficult!"

"True; but it is long ſince he was young himſelf, and the ſofter affections he never was acquainted with, and only regards them in his ſon as derogatory to his whole race. However, if there were not ſome few ſuch men, there would hardly be a family in the kingdom that could count a great grand-father. I am not, I muſt own, of his humour myſelf, but I think it rather peculiarly ſtranger, than peculiarly worſe than moſt other people's; and how, for example, was that of *your* uncle a whit the better? He was juſt as fond

fond of *his* name, as if, like Mr. Delvile, he could trace it from the time of the Saxons."

Cecilia ſtrongly felt the truth of this obſervation, but not chooſing to diſcuſs it, made not any anſwer, and Dr. Lyſter, after a few good-natured apologies, both for his friends, the Delviles, and himſelf, went up ſtairs.

"What continual diſturbance," cried ſhe, when left alone, "keeps me thus forever from reſt! no ſooner is one wound cloſed, but another is opened; mortification conſtantly ſucceeds diſtreſs, and when my heart is ſpared my pride is attacked, that not a moment of tranquillity may ever be allowed me! Had the loweſt of women won the affections of Mr. Delvile, could his father with leſs delicacy or leſs decency have acquainted her with his inflexible diſapprobation? To ſend with ſo little ceremony a meſſage ſo contemptuous and ſo preremptory! — but perhaps it is better, for had he, too, like Mrs. Delvile, joined kindness with rejection, I might ſtill more keenly have felt the perverſeneſs of my deſtiny.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

A PARTING.

THE next morning Dr. Lyſter called early, and having viſited Mrs. Delvile, and again met the two gentlemen of the faculty in whoſe care ſhe was to remain, he took his leave. But not without contriving firſt to ſpeak a few words to Cecilia in private, in which he charged her to be careful of her health, and re-animate her ſpirits. "Don't ſuppoſe," ſaid he, "that becauſe I am a friend of the Delvile family, I am either blind to your merits, or to their foibles, far from it; but then why ſhould they interfere with one another? Let them keep their prejudices, which, though different, are not worſe than their neighbours, and do you retain your excellencies, and draw from them the happineſs which they ought to give you. People reaſon and refine themſelves into a thouſand miſeries, by chooſing to ſettle that they can only be contented one way; whereas, there are fifty ways, if they would but look about them, that would commonly do as well."

"I believe, indeed, you are right," anſwered Cecilia, "and I thank you for the admonition; I will do what I can towards ſtudying

ſtudying your ſcheme of philoſophy, and it is always one ſtep to amendment, to be convinced that we want it."

"You are a ſenſible and charming girl," ſaid Dr. Lyſter, "and Mr. Delvile, ſhould he find a daughter-in-law deſcended in a right line from Egbert, firſt king of all England, won't be ſo well off as if he had ſatisfied himſelf with you. However, the old gentleman has a fair right, after all, to be pleaſed his own way, and let us blame him how we will, we ſhall find, upon ſifting, it is for no other reaſon but becauſe his humour happens to claſh with our own."

"That, indeed," ſaid Cecilia, ſmiling, "is a truth incontrovertable! and a truth to which, for the future, I will endeavour to give more weight. But will you permit me now to aſk one queſtion?—Can you tell me from whom, how, or when the intelligence which has cauſed all this diſturbance——"

She heſitated; but, comprehending her readily, he anſwered "How they got at it, I never heard, for I never thought it worth while to enquire, as it is ſo generally known, that nobody I meet with ſeems ignorant of it."

This was another, and a cruel ſhock to Cecilia, and Dr. Lyſter, perceiving it, again attempted to comfort her. "That the affair is ſomewhat ſpread," ſaid he, "is now not to be helped, and therefore little worth

thinking of; every body will agree that the choice of both does honour to both, and nobody need be aſhamed to be ſucceſſor to either, whenever the courſe of things leads Mr. Mortimer and yourſelf to make another election. He wiſely intends to go abroad, and will not return till he is his own man again. And as to you, my good young lady, what, after a ſhort time given to vexation, need interrupt your happineſs? You have the whole world before you, with youth, fortune, talents, beauty and independence; drive, therefore, from your head this unlucky affair, and remember there can hardly be a family in the kingdom, this one excepted, that will not rejoice in a connection with you."

He then good-humouredly ſhook hands with her, and went into his chaiſe.

Cecilia, though not ſlow in remarking the eaſe and philoſophy with which every one can argue upon the calamities, and moralize upon the miſconduct of others, had ſtill the candour and good ſenſe to ſee that there was reaſon in what he urged, and to reſolve upon making the beſt uſe in her power of the hints for conſolation ſhe might draw from his diſcourſe.

During the following week, ſhe devoted herſelf almoſt wholly to Mrs. Delvile, ſharing with the maid, whom ſhe had brought with her from the Caſtle, the fatigue of nurſing

nurſing her, and leaving to the Miſs Charletons the chief care of their grand-mother. For Mrs. Delvile appeared every hour more ſenſible of her attention, and more deſirous of her preſence, and though neither of them ſpoke, each was endeared to the other by the tender offices of friendſhip which were paid and received.

When this week was expired, Dr. Lyſter was prevailed upon to return again to Bury, in order to travel himſelf with Mrs. Delvile to Briſtol. "Well," cried he, taking Cecilia by the firſt opportunity aſide, "how are you? Have you ſtudied my ſcheme of philoſophy, as you promiſed me?"

"O yes," ſaid ſhe, "and made, I flatter myſelf, no little proficiency."

"You are a good girl," cried he, "a very extraordinary girl! I am ſure you are; and upon my honour I pity poor Mortimer with all my ſoul! But he is a noble young fellow, and behaves with a courage and ſpirit that does me good to behold. To have obtained you, he would have moved heaven and earth, but finding you out of his reach, he ſubmits to his fate like a man."

Cecilia's eyes gliſtened at this ſpeech; "Yes," ſaid ſhe, "he long ſince ſaid 'tis ſuſpenſe, 'tis hope, that make the miſery of life,—for there the paſſions have all power, and reaſon has none. But when evils are irremediable, and we have neither reſources to

plan, nor caſtle-building to delude us, we find time for the cultivation of philoſophy, and flatter ourſelves, perhaps, that we have found inclination!"

"Why you have conſidered this matter very deeply," ſaid he; "but I muſt not have you give way to theſe ſerious reflections. Thought, after all, has a cruel ſpite againſt happineſs; I would have you, therefore, keep as much as you conveniently can, out of its company. Run about and divert yourſelf, 'tis all you have for it. The true art of happineſs in this moſt whimſical world, ſeems nothing more nor leſs than this.—Let thoſe who have leiſure, find employment, and thoſe who have buſineſs find leiſure."

He then told her that Mr. Delvile ſenior was much better, and no longer confined to his room: and that he had had the pleaſure of ſeeing an entire reconciliation take place between him and his ſon, of whom he was more fond and more proud than any other father in the univerſe.

"Think of him, however, my dear young lady," he continued, "no more, for the matter I ſee is deſperate: you muſt pardon my being a little officious, when I confeſs to you I could not help propoſing to the old gentleman an expedient of my own; for as I could not drive you out of my head, I employed myſelf in thinking what might be done by way of accommodation. Now my ſcheme

was

was really a very good one, only when people are prejudiced, all reaſoning is thrown away upon them. I propoſed ſinking *both* your names, ſince they are ſo at variance with one another, and ſo adopting a third, by means of a title. But Mr. Delvile angrily declared, that though ſuch a ſcheme might do very well for the needy Lord Ernolf, a Peer of twenty years, his own noble anceſtors ſhould never, by his conſent, forfeit a name which ſo many centuries had rendered honourable. His ſon Mortimer, he added, muſt inevitably inherit the title of his grandfather, his uncle being old and unmarried; but yet he would rather ſee him a beggar, than loſe his deareſt hope that *Delvile*, Lord *Delvile*, would deſcend, both name and title, from generation to generation unſullied and uninterrupted."

"I am ſorry, indeed," ſaid Cecilia, "that ſuch a propoſal was made, and I earneſtly entreat that none of any ſort may be repeated."

"Well, well," ſaid he, "I would not for the world do any miſchief, but who would not have ſuppoſed ſuch a propoſal would have done good?"

"Mr. Mortimer," he then added, "is to meet us at —— for he would not, he ſaid, come again to this place, upon ſuch terms as he was here laſt week, for the whole worth of the king's dominions."

The carriage was now ready, and Mrs. Delvile was prepared to depart. Cecilia approached to take leave of her, but Dr. Lyſter following, ſaid, "No talking! no thanking! no compliments of any ſort! I ſhall carry off my patient without permitting one civil ſpeech, and for all the rudeneſs I make her guilty of, I am willing to be reſponſible."

Cecilia would then have retreated, but Mrs. Delvile, holding out both her hands, ſaid "To every thing elſe, Dr. Lyſter, I am content to ſubmit; but were I to die while uttering the words, I cannot leave this ineſtimable creature without firſt ſaying how much I love her, how I honour, and how I thank her! without entreating her to be careful of her health, and conjuring her to complete the greatneſs of her conduct, by not ſuffering her ſpirits to ſink from the exertion of her virtue. And now, my love, God bleſs you!"

She then embraced her, and went on; Cecilia, at a motion of Dr. Lyſter's, forbearing to follow her.

"And thus," cried ſhe, when they were gone, "thus ends all my connection with this family! which it ſeems as if I was only to have known for the purpoſe of affording a new proof of the inſufficiency of ſituation to conſtitute happineſs. Who looks not upon mine as the perfection of human felicity?—And ſo, perhaps, it is, for it may be that felicity

ficity and humanity are never permitted to come nearer."

And thus, in philoſophic ſadneſs, by reaſoning upon the univerſality of miſery, ſhe reſtrained, at leaſt, all violence of ſorrow, though her ſpirits were dejected, and her heart was heavy.

But the next day brought with it ſome comfort that a little lightened her ſadneſs; Mrs. Charlton, almoſt wholly recovered, was able to go down ſtairs, and Cecilia had at leaſt the ſatisfaction of ſeeing an happy concluſion to an illneſs of which, with the utmoſt concern and regret, ſhe conſidered herſelf as the cauſe. She attended her with the moſt unremitting aſſiduity, and being really very thankful, endeavoured to appear happy, and flattered herſelf that, by continual effort, the appearance in a ſhort time would become reality.

Mrs. Charlton retired early, and Cecilia accompanied her up ſtairs: and while ſhe was with her, was informed that Mr. Monckton was in the parlour.

The various, afflicting, and uncommon ſcenes in which ſhe had been engaged ſince ſhe laſt ſaw him, had almoſt wholly driven him from her remembrance, or when at any time he recurred to it, it was only to attribute the diſcontinuance of his viſits to the offence ſhe had given him, in refuſing to

follow his advice by relinquiſhing her London expedition.

Full, therefore, of the mortifying tranſactions which had paſſed ſince their parting, and fearful of his enquiries into diſgraces he had nearly foretold, ſhe heard him announced with chagrin, and waited upon him in the moſt painful confuſion.

Far different were the feelings of Mr. Monckton; he read in her countenance the dejection of diſappointment, which impreſſed upon his heart the vivacity of hope: her evident ſhame was to him ſecret triumph, her ill-concealed ſorrow revived all his expectations.

She haſtily began a converſation by mentioning her debt to him, and apologiſing for not paying it the moment ſhe was of age. He knew but too well how her time had been occupied, and aſſured her the delay was wholly immaterial.

He then led to an enquiry into the preſent ſituation of her affairs; but unable to endure a diſquiſition, which could only be productive of cenſure and mortification, ſhe haſtily ſtopt it, exclaiming, "Aſk me not, I entreat you, Sir, any detail of what has paſſed,—— the event has brought me ſufferings that may well make blame diſpenſed with;—I acknowledge all your wiſdom, I am ſenſible of my own error, but the affair

is

is wholly dropt, and the unhappy connexion I was forming is broken off for-ever!"

Little now was Mr. Monckton's effort in repreſſing his further curioſity, and he ſtarted other ſubjects with readineſs, gaiety and addreſs. He mentioned Mrs. Charlton, for whom he had not the ſmalleſt regard; he talked to her of Mrs. Harrel, whoſe very exiſtence was indifferent to him; and he ſpoke of their common acquaintance in the country, for not one of whom he would have grieved, if aſſured of meeting no more. His powers of converſation were enlivened by his hopes; and his exhilarated ſpirits made all ſubjects ſeem happy to him. A weight was removed from his mind which had nearly borne down even his remoteſt hopes; the object of his eager purſuit ſeemed ſtill within his reach, and the rival into whoſe power he had ſo lately almoſt beheld her delivered, was totally renounced, and no longer to be dreaded. A revolution ſuch as this, raiſed expectations more ſanguine than ever; and in quitting the houſe, he exultingly conſidered himſelf releaſed from every obſtacle to his views —till, juſt as he arrived home, he recollected his wife!

CHAP. V.

A TALE.

A WEEK paſſed, during which Cecilia, however ſad, ſpent her time as uſual with the family, denying to herſelf all voluntary indulgence of grief, and forbearing to ſeek conſolation from ſolitude, or relief from tears. She never named Delvile, ſhe begged Mrs. Charlton never to mention him; ſhe called to her aid the account ſhe had received from Dr. Lyſter of his firmneſs, and endeavoured, by an emulous ambition, to fortify her mind from the weakneſs of depreſſion and regret.

This week, a week of ſtruggle with all her feelings, was juſt elapſed, when ſhe received by the poſt the following letter from Mrs. Delvile.

To Miſs BEVERLEY.

Briſtol, Oct. 21.

MY ſweet young friend will not, I hope, be ſorry to hear of my ſafe arrival at this place: to me every account of her health and welfare, will ever be the intelligence I ſhall moſt

moſt covet to receive. Yet I mean not to aſk for it in return; to chance I will truſt for information, and I only write now to ſay I ſhall write no more.

Too much for thanks is what I owe you; and what I think of you is beyond all power of expreſſion. Do not, then, wiſh me ill, ill as I have ſeemed to merit of you, for my own heart is almoſt broken by the tyranny I have been compelled to practiſe upon yours.

And now let me bid a long adieu to you, my admirable Cecilia; you ſhall not be tormented with a uſeleſs correſpondence, which can only awaken painful recollections, or give riſe to yet more painful new anxieties. Fervently will I pray for the reſtoration of your happineſs, to which nothing can ſo greatly contribute as that wiſe, that uniform command, ſo feminine, yet ſo dignified, you maintain over your paſſions; which often I have admired, though never ſo feelingly as at this conſcious moment! when my own health is the ſacrifice of emotions moſt fatally unreſtrained.

Send to me no anſwer, even if you have the ſweetneſs to wiſh it; every new proof of the generoſity of your nature is to me but a new wound. Forget us, therefore, wholly,—alas! you have only known us for ſorrow!—forget us, dear and invaluable Cecilia! though ever, as you have nobly deſerved, muſt you be fondly and gratefully remembered by

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

The attempted philoſophy, and laboured reſignation of Cecilia, this letter deſtroyed: the ſtruggle was over, the apathy was at an end, and ſhe burſt into an agony of tears, which finding the vent they had long ſought, now flowed unchecked down her cheeks, ſad monitors of the weakneſs of reaſon oppoſed to the anguiſh of ſorrow!

A letter at once ſo careſſing, yet ſo abſolute, forced its way to her heart, in ſpite of the fortitude ſhe had flattered herſelf was its guard. In giving up Delvile ſhe was ſatisfied of the propriety of ſeeing him no more, and convinced that even to talk of him would be folly and imprudence; but to be told that for the future they muſt remain ſtrangers to the exiſtence of each other—there ſeemed in this a hardſhip, a rigour, that was inſupportable.

"Oh, what," cried ſhe, "is human nature! in its beſt ſtate how imperfect! that a woman ſuch as this, ſo noble in character, ſo elevated in ſentiment, with heroiſm to ſacrifice to her ſenſe of duty the happineſs of a ſon, whom with joy ſhe would die to ſerve, can herſelf be thus governed by prejudice, thus enſlaved, thus ſubdued by opinion!" Yet never, even when miſerable, unjuſt or irrational; her grief was unmixed with anger, and her tears ſtreamed not from reſentment, but affliction. The ſituation of Mrs. Delvile, however different, ſhe conſidered to be as wretched as her own. She read, therefore,

with ſadneſs, but not bitterneſs, her farewel, and received not with diſdain, but with gratitude, her ſympathy. Yet, though her indignation was not irritated, her ſufferings were doubled, by a farewel ſo kind, yet ſo deſpotic; a ſympathy ſo affectionate, yet ſo hopeleſs.

In this firſt indulgence of grief which ſhe had granted to her diſappointment, ſhe was ſoon interrupted by a ſummons down ſtairs to a gentleman.

Unfit and unwilling to be ſeen, ſhe begged that he might leave his name, and appoint a time for calling again.

Her maid brought for anſwer, that he believed his name was unknown to her, and deſired to ſee her now, unleſs ſhe was employed in ſome matter of moment.

She then put up her letter, and went into the parlour; and there, to her infinite amazement, beheld Mr. Albany.

"How little, Sir," ſhe cried, "did I expect this pleaſure."

"This pleaſure," repeated he, "do you call it?—what ſtrange abuſe of words! what cauſeleſs trifling with honeſty! is language of no purpoſe but to wound the ear with untruths? Is the gift of ſpeech only granted us to pervert the uſe of underſtanding? I can give you no pleaſure, I have no power to give it any one; you can give none to me—the whole world could not inveſt you with the means!"

"Well,

"Well, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, who had little ſpirit to defend herſelf, "I will not vindicate the expreſſion, but of this I will unfeignedly aſſure you, I am at leaſt as glad to ſee you juſt now, as I ſhould be to ſee any body."

"Your eyes," cried he, "are red, your voice is inarticulate;—young, rich, and attractive, the world at your feet; that world yet untried, and its falſehood unknown, how have you thus found means to anticipate miſery? which way have you uncovered the cauldron of human woes? Fatal and early anticipation! that cover once removed, can never be replaced; thoſe woes, thoſe boiling woes, will pour out upon you continually, and only when your heart ceaſes to beat, will their ebullition ceaſe to torture you!"

"Alas!" cried Cecilia, ſhuddering, "how cruel, yet how true!"

"Why went you," cried he, "to the cauldron? it came not to you. Miſery ſeeks not man, but man miſery. He walks out in the ſun, but ſtops not for a cloud; confident, he purſues his way, till the ſtorm which, gathering, he might have avoided, burſts over his devoted head. Scared and amazed, he repents his temerity; he calls, but it is then too late! he runs, but it is thunder which follows him; Such is the preſumption of man, ſuch at once is the arrogance and ſhallowneſs of his nature! And thou, ſimple and blind! haſt thou, too, followed whither fancy has led thee, unheeding

ing that thy carreer was too vehement for tranquillity, nor miſſing that lovely companion of youth's early innocence, till, adventurous and unthinking, thou haſt loſt her for ever!"

In the preſent weak ſtate of Cecilia's ſpirits, this attack was too much for her; and the tears ſhe had juſt, and with difficulty reſtrained, again forced their way down her cheeks, as ſhe anſwered, "It is but too true,—I have loſt her for ever!"

"Poor thing," ſaid he, while the rigour of his countenance was ſoftened into the gentleſt commiſeration, "ſo young!—looking, too, ſo innocent!—'tis hard—And is nothing left thee? no ſmall remaining hope, to cheat, humanely cheat thy yet not wholly extinguiſhed credulity?"

Cecilia wept without anſwering.

"Let me not," ſaid he, "waſte my compaſſion upon nothing; compaſſion is with me no effuſion of affectation; tell me, then, if thou deſerveſt it, or if thy misfortunes are imaginary, and thy grief is factitious?

"Factitious," repeated ſhe, "Good heaven!"

"Anſwer me, then, theſe queſtions, in which I ſhall compriſe the only calamities for which ſorrow has no controul, or none from human motives. Tell me, then, have you loſt by death the friend of your boſom?"

"No!"

"I

"Is your fortune diſſipated by extravagance, and your power of relieving the diſtreſſed at an end?"

"No; the power and the will are I hope equally undiminiſhed."

"O, then, unhappy girl! have you been guilty of ſome vice, and hangs remorſe thus heavy on your conſcience?"

"No, no; thank heaven, to that miſery at leaſt, I am a ſtranger!"

His countenance now again reſumed its ſeverity, and, in the ſterneſt manner, "Whence then," he ſaid, "theſe tears? and what is this caprice you dignify with the name of ſorrow? —ſtrange wantonneſs of indolence and luxury! perverſe repining of ungrateful plenitude!—oh hadſt thou known what *I* have ſuffered!—"

"Could I leſſen what you have ſuffered," ſaid Cecilia, "I ſhould ſincerely rejoice; but heavy indeed muſt be your affliction, if mine in its compariſon deſerves to be ſtyled caprice!"

"Caprice!" repeated he, "'tis joy! 'tis extacy compared with mine!—Thou haſt not in licentiouſneſs waſted thy inheritance! thou haſt not by remorſe barred each avenue to enjoyment! nor yet has the cold grave ſeized the beloved of thy ſoul!"

"Neither," ſaid Cecilia, "I hope, are the evils you have yourſelf ſuſtained ſo irremediable?"

"Yes,

"Yes, I have borne them all!—*have* borne? I bear them ſtill; I ſhall bear them while I breathe! I may rue them, perhaps, yet longer."

"Good God!" cried Cecilia, ſhrinking, "what a world is this! how full of woe and wickedneſs!"

"Yet thou, too, canſt complain," cried he, "though happy in life's only bleſſing, Innocence! thou, too, canſt murmur, though ſtranger to death's only terror, Sin! O yet, if thy ſorrow is unpolluted with guilt, be regardleſs of all elſe, and rejoice in thy deſtiny!"

"But who," cried ſhe, deeply ſighing, "ſhall teach me ſuch a leſſon of joy, when all within riſes to oppoſe it?"

"I," cried he, "will teach it thee, for I will tell thee my own ſad ſtory. Then wilt thou find how much happier is thy lot, then wilt thou raiſe thy head in thankful triumph."

"O, no! triumph comes not ſo lightly!—yet if you will venture to truſt me with ſome account of yourſelf, I ſhall be glad to hear it, and much obliged by the communication."

"I will," he anſwered, "whatever I may ſuffer: to awaken thee from this dream of fancied ſorrow, I will open all my wounds, and thou ſhalt probe them with freſh ſhame."

"No, indeed," cried Cecilia with quickneſs, "I will not hear you, if the relation will be ſo painful."

"Upon

"Upon *me* this humanity is loſt," ſaid he, "ſince puniſhment and penitence alone give me comfort. I will tell thee, therefore, my crimes, that thou mayeſt know thy own felicity, leſt, ignorant it means nothing but innocence, thou ſhouldſt loſe it, unconſcious of its value. Liſten then to me, and learn what miſery is! Guilt is alone the baſis of laſting unhappineſs; guilt is the baſis of mine, and therefore I am a wretch for-ever!"

Cecilia would have again declined hearing him, but he refuſed to be ſpared: and as her curioſity had long been excited to know ſomething of his hiſtory, and the motives of his extraordinary conduct, ſhe was glad to have it ſatisfied, and gave him the utmoſt attention.

"I will not ſpeak to you of my family," ſaid he; "hiſtorical accuracy would little anſwer to either of us. I am a native of the Weſt Indies, and I was early ſent hither to be educated. While I was yet at the Univerſity, I ſaw, I adored, and I purſued the faireſt flower that ever put forth its ſweet buds, the ſofteſt heart that ever was broken by ill uſage! She was poor and unprotected, the daughter of a villager; ſhe was untaught and unpretending, the child of ſimplicity! But fifteen ſummers had ſhe bloomed, and her heart was an eaſy conqueſt; yet, once made mine, it reſiſted all allurement to infidelity. My fellow ſtudents attacked her; ſhe was aſſaulted by all the arts of ſeduction; flattery, bribery, ſuppli-

ſupplication, all were employed, yet all failed; ſhe was wholly my own; and with ſincerity ſo attractive, I determined to marry her in defiance of all worldly objections.

"The ſudden death of my father called me haſtily to Jamaica; I feared leaving this treaſure unguarded, yet in decency could neither marry nor take her directly; I pledged my faith, therefore, to return to her, as ſoon as I had ſettled my affairs, and I left to a boſom friend the inſpection of her conduct in my abſence.

"To leave her was madneſs,—to truſt in man was madneſs.—O, hateful race! how has the world been abhorrent to me ſince that time! I have loathed the light of the ſun, I have ſhrunk from the commerce of my fellow-creatures; the voice of man I have deteſted, his ſight I have abominated!—but oh, more than all ſhould I be abominated myſelf!

"When I came to my fortune, intoxicated with ſudden power, I forgot this fair bloſſom, I revelled in licentiouſneſs and vice, and left it expoſed and forlorn. Riot ſucceeded riot, till a fever, incurred by my own intemperance, firſt gave me time to think. Then was ſhe revenged, for then firſt remorſe was my portion: her image was brought back to my mind with frantic fondneſs, and bittereſt contrition. The moment I recovered; I returned to England; I flew to claim her,—but ſhe was loſt! no one knew whither ſhe was

was gone; the wretch I had truſted pretended to know leaſt of all; yet, after a furious ſearch, I traced her to a cottage, where he had concealed her himſelf!

"When ſhe ſaw me, ſhe ſcreamed and would have flown; I ſtopt her, and told her I came faithfully and honourably to make her my wife:—her own faith and honour, though ſullied, were not extinguiſhed, for ſhe inſtantly acknowledged the fatal tale of her undoing!

"Did I recompenſe this ingenuouſneſs? this unexampled, this beautiful ſacrifice to intuitive integrity! Yes, with my curſes!—I loaded her with execrations, I reviled her in language the moſt opprobrious, I inſulted her even for her confeſſion! I invoked all evil upon her from the bottom of my heart!—She knelt at my feet, ſhe implored my forgiveneſs and compaſſion, ſhe wept with the bitterneſs of deſpair,—and yet I ſpurned her from me! —Spurned?—let me not hide my ſhame! I barbarouſly ſtruck her!—nor ſingle was the blow!—it was doubled, it was reiterated! —Oh wretch, unyielding and unpitying!— where ſhall hereafter be clemency for thee! —So fair a form! ſo young a culprit! ſo infamouſly ſeduced! ſo humbly penitent!

"In this miſerable condition, helpleſs and deplorable, mangled by theſe ſavage hands, and reviled by this inhuman tongue, I left her, in ſearch of the villain who had deſtroyed her: but, cowardly as treacherous, he had abſconded.

abſconded. Repenting my fury, I haſtened to her again; the fierceneſs of my cruelty ſhamed me when I grew calmer, the ſoftneſs of her ſorrow melted me upon recollection: I returned, therefore, to ſoothe her,—but again ſhe was gone! terrified with expectation of inſult, ſhe hid herſelf from all my enquiries. I wandered in ſearch of her two long years to no purpoſe, regardleſs of my affairs, and of all things but that purſuit——At length, I thought I ſaw her—in London, alone, and walking in the ſtreets at midnight.——I fearfully followed her,—and followed her into an houſe of infamy!

"The wretches by whom ſhe was ſurrounded were noiſy and drinking, they heeded me little,—but ſhe ſaw and knew me at once!—She did not ſpeak, nor did I,—but in two moments ſhe fainted, and fell.

"Yet did I not help her; the people took their own meaſures to recover her, and when ſhe was again able to ſtand, would have removed her to another apartment.

"I then went forward, and forcing them away from her with all the ſtrength of deſperation, I turned to the unhappy ſinner, who to chance only ſeemed to leave what became of her, and cried, From this ſcene of vice and horror let me yet reſcue you! you look ſtill unfit for ſuch ſociety, truſt yourſelf, therefore, to me. I ſeized her hand, I drew, I almoſt dragged her away. She trembled, ſhe could ſcarce

ſcarce totter, but neither conſented nor refuſed, neither ſhed a tear, nor ſpoke a word, and her countenance preſented a picture of affright, amazement, and horror.

"I took her to a houſe in the country, each of us ſilent the whole way. I gave her an apartment, and a female attendant, and ordered for her every convenience I could ſuggeſt. I ſtaid myſelf in the ſame houſe, but diſtracted with remorſe for the guilt and ruin into which I had terrified her, I could not bear her ſight.

"In a few days her maid aſſured me the life ſhe led muſt deſtroy her; that ſhe would taſte nothing but bread and water, never ſpoke, and never ſlept.

"Alarmed by this account, I flew into her apartment; pride and reſentment gave way to pity and fondneſs, and I beſought her to take comfort. I ſpoke, however, to a ſtatue, ſhe replied not, nor ſeemed to hear me. I then humbled myſelf to her as in the days of her innocence and firſt power, ſupplicating her notice, entreating even her commiſeration! all was to no purpoſe; ſhe neither received nor repulſed me, and was alike inattentive to exhortation and to prayer.

"Whole hours did I ſpend at her feet, vowing never to ariſe till ſhe ſpoke to me,—all, all, in vain! ſhe ſeemed deaf, mute, inſenſible; her face unmoved, a ſettled deſpair fixed in her eyes,—thoſe eyes that had never looked

at

at me but with dove-like ſoftneſs and compliance!—She ſat conſtantly in one chair, ſhe never changed her dreſs, no perſuaſions could prevail with her to lie down, and at meals ſhe juſt ſwallowed ſo much dry bread as might ſave her from dying for want of food.

"What was the diſtraction of my ſoul, to find her bent upon this courſe to her laſt hour! —quick came that hour, but never will it be forgotten! rapidly it was gone, but eternally it will be remembered!

"When ſhe felt herſelf expiring, ſhe acknowledged ſhe had made a vow, upon entering the houſe, to live ſpeechleſs and motionleſs, as a penance for her offences!

"I kept her loved corpſe till my own ſenſes failed me,—it was then only torn from me,—and I have loſt all recollection of three years of my exiſtence!"

Cecilia ſhuddered at this hint, yet was not ſurpriſed by it; Mr. Goſport had acquainted her he had been formerly confined; and his flightineſs, wildneſs, florid language, and extraordinary way of life, had long led her to ſuſpect his reaſon had been impaired.

"The ſcene to which my memory firſt leads me back," he continued, "is viſiting her grave; ſolemnly upon it I returned her vow, though not by one of equal ſeverity. To her poor remains did I pledge myſelf, that the day ſhould never paſs in which I would receive nouriſhment, nor the night come in which

which I would take reſt, till I had done, or zealouſly attempted to do, ſome ſervice to a fellow-creature.

"For this purpoſe have I wandered from city to city, from the town to the country, and from the rich to the poor. I go into every houſe where I can gain admittance, I admoniſh all who will hear me, I ſhame even thoſe who will not. I ſeek the Diſtreſſed where-ever they are hid, I follow the Proſperous to beg a mite to ſerve them. I look for the Diſſipated in public, where, amidſt their licentiouſneſs, I check them; I purſue the Unhappy in private, where I counſel and endeavour to aſſiſt them. My own power is ſmall; my relations, during my ſufferings, limiting me to an annuity; but there is no one I ſcruple to ſolicit, and by zeal I ſupply ability.

"O, life of hardſhip and penance! laborious, toilſome, and reſtleſs! but I have merited no better, and I will not repine at it; I have vowed that I will endure it, and I will not be forſworn.

"One indulgence alone from time to time I allow myſelf,—'tis muſic! which has power to delight me even to rapture! it quiets all anxiety, it carries me out of myſelf, I forget through it every calamity, even the bittereſt anguiſh.

"Now then, that thou haſt heard me, tell me, haſt *thou* cauſe of ſorrow?"

"Alas,"

"Alas," cried Cecilia, "this indeed is a picture of miſery to make *my* lot ſeem all happineſs!"

"Art thou thus open to conviction?" cried he, mildly; "and doſt thou not fly the voice of truth! for truth and reproof are one."

"No, I would rather ſeek it; I feel myſelf wretched, however inadequate may be the cauſe; I wiſh to be more reſigned, and if you can inſtruct me how, I ſhall thankfully attend to you."

"Oh yet uncorrupted creature!" cried he, "with joy will I be thy monitor,—joy long untaſted! Many have I wiſhed to ſerve; all, hitherto, have rejected my offices; too honeſt to flatter them, they had not the fortitude to liſten to me! too low to advance them, they had not the virtue to bear with me. You alone have I yet found pure enough not to fear inſpection, and good enough to wiſh to be better. Yet words alone will not content me; I muſt alſo have deeds. Nor will your purſe, however readily opened, ſuffice; you muſt give to me alſo your time and your thoughts; for money ſent by others, to others only will afford relief; to lighten your own cares, you muſt diſtribute it yourſelf."

"You ſhall find me," ſaid ſhe, "a docile pupil, and moſt glad to be inſtructed how my exiſtence may be uſeful."

"Happy then," cried he, "was the hour that brought me to this county; yet not in

ſearch of you did I come, but of the mutable and ill-fated Belfield. Erring, yet ingenious young man! what a leſſon to the vanity of talents, to the gaiety, the brilliancy of wit, is the ſight of that green fallen plant! not ſapleſs by age, nor withered by diſeaſe, but deſtroyed by want of pruning, and bending, breaking by its own luxuriance!"

"And where, Sir, is he now?

"Labouring wilfully in the field, with thoſe who labour compulſatorily; ſuch are we all by nature, diſcontented, perverſe, and changeable; though all have not courage to appear ſo, and few, like Belfield, are worth watching when they do. He told me he was happy; I knew it could not be: but his employment was inoffenſive, and I left him without reproach. In this neighbourhood I heard of you, and found your name was coupled with praiſe. I came to ſee if you deſerved it; I have ſeen, and am ſatisfied."

"You are not, then, very difficult, for I have yet done nothing. How are we to begin theſe operations you propoſe? You have awakened me by them to an expectation of pleaſure, which nothing elſe, I believe, could juſt now have given me."

"We will work," cried he, "together, till not a woe ſhall remain upon your mind. The bleſſings of the fatherleſs, the prayers of little children, ſhall heal all your wounds with balm of ſweeteſt fragrance. When ſad, they

they ſhall cheer, when complaining, they ſhall bothe you. We will go to their roofleſs houſes, and ſee them repaired; we will exclude from their dwellings the inclemency of the weather; we will clothe them from cold, we will reſcue them from hunger. The cries of diſtreſs ſhall be changed to notes of joy: your heart ſhall be enraptured; mine, too, ſhall revive — Oh, whither am I wandering? I am painting an Elyſium! and while I idly ſpeak, ſome fainting object dies for want of ſuccour! Farewell; I will fly to the abodes of wretchedneſs, and come to you to-morrow to render them the abodes of happineſs."

He then went away.

This ſingular viſit was for Cecilia moſt fortunately timed: it almoſt ſurpriſed her out of her peculiar grief, by the view which it opened to her of general calamity; wild, flighty and imaginative as were his language and his counſels, their morality was ſtriking, and their benevolence was affecting. Taught by him to compare her ſtate with that of at leaſt half her ſpecies, ſhe began more candidly to weigh what was left with what was withdrawn, and found the balance in her favour. The plan he had preſented to her of good works was conſonant to her character and inclinations: and the active charity in which he propoſed to engage her, re-animated her fallen hopes, though to far different ſubjects from thoſe which had depreſſed them. Any ſcheme of worldly

happineſs would have ſickened and diſguſted her; but her mind was juſt in the ſituation to be impreſſed with elevated piety, and to adopt any deſign in which virtue humoured melancholy.

CHAP. VI.

A SHOCK.

CECILIA paſſed the reſt of the day in fanciful projects of beneficence; ſhe determined to wander with her romantic new ally whitherſoever he would lead her, and to ſpare neither fortune, time, nor trouble, in ſeeking and relieving the diſtreſſed. Not all her attempted philoſophy had calmed her mind like this plan; in merely refuſing indulgence to grief, ſhe had only locked it up in her heart, where eternally ſtruggling for vent, ſhe was almoſt overpowered by reſtraining it; but now her affliction had no longer her whole faculties to itſelf; the hope of doing good, the pleaſure of eaſing pain, the intention of devoting her time to the ſervice of the unhappy, once more delighted her imagination,—that ſource of promiſſory enjoyment, which though often obſtructed, is never, in youth, exhauſted.

She would not give Mrs. Charlton the unneceſſary pain of hearing the letter with which ſhe had been ſo much affected, but ſhe told her of the viſit of Albany, and pleaſed her with the account of their ſcheme.

At night, with leſs ſadneſs than uſual, ſhe retired to reſt. In her ſleep ſhe beſtowed riches, and poured plenty upon the land; ſhe humbled the oppreſſor, ſhe exalted the oppreſſed; ſlaves were raiſed to dignities, captives reſtored to liberty; beggars ſaw ſmiling abundance, and wretchedneſs was baniſhed the world. From a cloud in which ſhe was ſupported by angels, Cecilia beheld theſe wonders, and while enjoying the glorious illuſion, ſhe was awakened by her maid, with news that Mrs. Charlton was dying!

She ſtarted up, and, undreſſed, was running to her apartment, — when the maid, calling to ſtop her, confeſſed ſhe was already dead!

She had made her exit in the night, but the time was not exactly known; her own maid, who ſlept in the room with her, going early to her bedſide to enquire how ſhe did, found her cold and motionleſs, and could only conclude that a paralytic ſtroke had taken her off.

Happily and in good time had Cecilia been ſomewhat recruited by one night of refreſhing ſlumbers and flattering dreams, for the ſhock ſhe now received promiſed her not ſoon another.

She loſt in Mrs. Charlton a friend, whom nearly from her infancy ſhe had conſidered as a mother, and by whom ſhe had been cheriſhed with tenderneſs almoſt unequalled. She was not a woman of bright parts, or much cultivation, but her heart was excellent, and her diſpoſition was amiable. Cecilia had known her longer than her memory could look back, though the earlieſt circumſtances ſhe could trace were kindneſſes received from her. Since ſhe had entered into life, and found the difficulty of the part ſhe had to act, to this worthy old lady alone had ſhe unboſomed her ſecret cares. Though little aſſiſted by her counſel, ſhe was always certain of her ſympathy; and while her own ſuperior judgment directed her conduct, ſhe had the relief of communicating her ſchemes, and weighing her perplexities, with a friend to whom nothing that concerned her was indifferent, and whoſe greateſt wiſh and chief pleaſure was the enjoyment of her converſation.

If left to herſelf, in the preſent period of her life, Mrs. Charlton had certainly not been the friend of her choice. The delicacy of her mind, and the refinement of her ideas, had now rendered her faſtidious, and ſhe would have looked out for elegancies and talents to which Mrs. Charlton had no pretenſions: but thoſe who live in the country have little power of ſelection; confined to a ſmall circle, they muſt be content with what it offers;

fers; and however they may idolize extraordinary merit when they meet with it, they muſt not regard it as eſſential to friendſhip, for in their circumſcribed rotation, whatever may be their diſcontent, they can make but little change.

Such had been the ſituation to which Mrs. Charlton and Mrs. Harrel owed the friendſhip of Cecilia. Greatly their ſuperior in underſtanding and intelligence, had the candidates for her favour been more numerous, the election had not fallen upon either of them. But ſhe became known to both before diſcrimination made her difficult, and when her enlightened mind diſcerned their deficiencies, they had already an intereſt in her affections, which made her ſee them with lenity: and though ſometimes, perhaps, conſcious ſhe ſhould not have choſen them from many, ſhe adhered to them with ſincerity, and would have changed them for none.

Mrs. Harrel, however, too weak for ſimilar ſentiments, forgot her when out of ſight, and by the time they met again, was inſenſible to every thing but ſhew and diſſipation. Cecilia, ſhocked and ſurprized, firſt grieved from diſappointed affection, and then loſt that affection in angry contempt. But her fondneſs for Mrs. Charlton had never known abatement, as the kindneſs which had excited it had never known allay. She had loved her firſt from childiſh gratitude; but that love,

ſtrengthened and confirmed by confidential intercourſe, was now as ſincere and affectionate as if it had originated from ſympathetic admiration. Her loſs, therefore, was felt with the utmoſt ſeverity, and neither ſeeing nor knowing any means of replacing it, ſhe conſidered it as irreparable, and mourned it with bitterneſs.

When the firſt ſurprize of this cruel ſtroke was ſomewhat leſſened, ſhe ſent an expreſs to Mr. Monckton with the news, and entreated to ſee him immediately. He came without delay, and ſhe begged his counſel what ſtep ſhe ought herſelf to take in conſequence of this event. Her own houſe was ſtill unprepared for her; ſhe had of late neglected to haſten the workmen, and almoſt forgotten her intention of entering it. It was neceſſary, however, to change her abode immediately; ſhe was no longer in the houſe of Mrs. Charlton, but of her grand-daughters and co-heireſſes, each of whom ſhe diſliked, and upon neither of whom ſhe had any claim.

Mr. Monckton then, with the quickneſs of a man who utters a thought at the very moment of its projection, mentioned a ſcheme, upon which during his whole ride he had been ruminating; which was that ſhe would inſtantly remove to his houſe, and remain there till ſettled to her ſatisfaction.

Cecilia objected her little right of ſurpriſing Lady Margaret; but, without waiting to diſcuſs

cuſs it, leſt new objections ſhould ariſe, he quitted her, to fetch himſelf from her ladyſhip an invitation he meant to inſiſt upon her ſending.

Cecilia, though heartily diſliking this plan, knew not at preſent what better to adopt, and thought any thing preferable to going again to Mrs. Harrel, ſince that only could be done by feeding the anxiety of Mr. Arnott.

Mr. Monckton ſoon returned with a meſſage of his own fabrication; for his lady, though obliged to receive whom he pleaſed, took care to guard inviolate the independence of ſpeech, ſullenly perſevering in refuſing to ſay any thing, or perverſely ſaying only what he leaſt wiſhed to hear.

Cecilia then took a haſty leave of the Miſs Charltons, who, little affected by what they had loſt, and eager to examine what they had gained, parted from her gladly, and, with a heavy heart and weeping eyes, borrowed for the laſt time the carriage of her late worthy old friend, and for ever quitting her hoſpitable houſe, ſorrowfully ſet out for the Grove.

CHAP. VII.

A COGITATION.

LADY Margaret Monckton received Cecilia with the moſt gloomy coldneſs: ſhe apologized for the liberty ſhe had taken in making uſe of her ladyſhip's houſe, but, meeting no return of civility, ſhe withdrew to the room which had been prepared for her, and reſolved as much as poſſible to keep out of her ſight.

It now became neceſſary without farther delay to ſettle her plan of life, and fix her place of reſidence. The forbidding looks of Lady Margaret made her haſten her reſolves, which otherwiſe would for a while have given way to grief for her recent misfortune.

She ſent for the ſurveyor who had the ſuperintendance of her eſtates, to enquire how ſoon her own houſe would be fit for her reception; and heard there was yet work for near two months.

This anſwer made her very uncomfortable. To continue two months under the roof with Lady Margaret was a penance ſhe could not enjoin herſelf, nor was ſhe at all ſure Lady Margaret would ſubmit to it any better: ſhe determined, therefore, to releaſe herſelf from the

the conſcious burthen of being an unwelcome viſitor, by boarding with ſome creditable family at Bury, and devoting the two months in which ſhe was to be kept from her houſe, to a general arrangement of her affairs, and a final ſettling with her guardians.

For theſe purpoſes it would be neceſſary ſhe ſhould go to London: but with whom, or in what manner, ſhe could not decide. She deſired, therefore, another conference with Mr. Monckton, who met her in the parlour.

She then communicated to him her ſchemes; and begged his counſel in her perplexities.

He was delighted at the application, and extremely well pleaſed with her deſign of boarding at Bury, well knowing, he could then watch and viſit her at his pleaſure, and have far more comfort in her ſociety than even in his own houſe, where all the vigilance with which he obſerved her was ſhort of that with which he was himſelf obſerved by Lady Margaret. He endeavoured, however, to diſſuade her from going to town, but her eagerneſs to pay the large ſum ſhe owed him, was now too great to be conquered. Of age, her fortune wholly in her power, and all attendance upon Mrs. Charlton at an end, ſhe had no longer any excuſe for having a debt in the world, and would ſuffer no perſuaſion to make her begin her career in life, with a negligence in ſettling her accounts which ſhe

had ſo often cenſured in others. To go to London, therefore, ſhe was fixed, and all that ſhe deſired was his advice concerning the journey.

He then told her, that in order to ſettle with her guardians, ſhe muſt write to them in form, to demand an account of the ſums that had been expended during her minority, and announce her intention for the future to take the management of her fortune into her own hands.

She immediately followed his directions, and conſented to remain at the Grove till their anſwers arrived.

Being now, therefore, unavoidably fixed for ſome time at the houſe, ſhe thought it proper and decent to attempt ſoftening Lady Margaret in her favour. She exerted all her powers to pleaſe and to oblige her; but the exertion was neceſſarily vain, not only from the diſpoſition, but the ſituation of her ladyſhip, ſince every effort made for this conciliatory purpoſe, rendered her doubly amiable in the eyes of her huſband, and conſequently to herſelf more odious than ever. Her jealouſy, already but too well founded, received every hour the poiſonous nouriſhment of freſh conviction, which ſo much ſoured and exaſperated a temper naturally harſh, that her malignity and ill-humour grew daily more acrimonious. Nor would ſhe have contented herſelf with diſplaying this iraſcibility by general moroſe-

moroſeneſs, had not the ſame ſuſpicious watchfulneſs which diſcovered to her the paſſion of her huſband, ſerved equally to make manifeſt the indifference and innocence of Cecilia; to reproach her, therefore, ſhe had not any pretence, though her knowledge how much ſhe had to dread her, paſſed current in her mind for ſufficient reaſon to hate her. The Angry and the Violent uſe little diſcrimination;—whom they like, they enquire not if they approve; but whoever, no matter how unwittingly, ſtands in their way, they ſcruple not to ill uſe, and conclude they may laudably deteſt.

Cecilia, though much diſguſted, gave not over her attempt, which ſhe conſidered but as her due while ſhe continued in her houſe. Her general character, alſo, for peeviſhneſs and haughty ill-breeding, ſkilfully, from time to time, diſplayed, and artfully repined at by Mr. Monckton, ſtill kept her from ſuſpecting any peculiar animoſity to herſelf, and made her impute all that paſſed to the mere rancour of ill-humour. She confined herſelf, however, as much as poſſible, to her own apartment, where her ſorrow for Mrs. Charlton almoſt hourly increaſed, by the compariſon ſhe was forced upon making of her houſe with the Grove.

That worthy old lady left her grand-daughters her co-heireſſes and ſole executrixes. She bequeathed from them nothing conſiderable, though

though ſhe left ſome donations for the poor, and ſeveral of her friends were remembered by ſmall legacies. Among them Cecilia had her picture, and favourite trinkets, with a paragraph in her will, that as there was no one ſhe ſo much loved, had her fortune been leſs ſplendid, ſhe ſhould have ſhared with her grand-daughters whatever ſhe had to beſtow.

Cecilia was much affected by this laſt and ſolemn remembrance. She more than ever coveted to be alone, that ſhe might grieve undiſturbed, and ſhe lamented without ceaſing the fatigue and the illneſs which, in ſo late a period, as it proved, of her life, ſhe had herſelf been the means of occaſioning to her.

Mr. Monckton had too much prudence to interrupt this deſire of ſolitude, which indeed coſt him little pain, as he conſidered her leaſt in danger when alone. She received in about a week anſwers from both her guardians. Mr. Delvile's letter was cloſely to the purpoſe, without a word but of buſineſs, and couched in the haughtieſt terms. As he had never, he ſaid, acted, he had no accounts to ſend in; but as he was going to town in a few days, he would ſee her for a moment in the preſence of Mr. Briggs, that a joint releaſe might be ſigned, to prevent any future application to him.

Cecilia much lamented there was any neceſſity for her ſeeing him at all, and looked forward

forward to the interview as the greateſt mortification ſhe could ſuffer.

Mr. Briggs, though ſtill more conciſe, was far kinder in his language: but he adviſed her to defer her ſcheme of taking the money into her own hands, aſſuring her ſhe would be cheated, and had better leave it to him.

When ſhe communicated theſe epiſtles to Mr. Monckton, he failed not to read, with an emphaſis, by which his arrogant meaning was ſtill more arrogantly enforced, the letter of Mr. Delvile aloud. Nor was he ſparing in comments that might render it yet more offenſive. Cecilia neither concurred in what he ſaid, nor oppoſed it, but contented herſelf, when he was ſilent, with producing the other letter.

Mr. Monckton read not this with more favour. He openly attacked the character of Briggs, as covetous, rapacious, and overreaching, and warned her by no means to abide by his counſel, without firſt taking the opinion of ſome diſintereſted perſon. He then ſtated the various arts which might be practiſed upon her inexperience, enumerated the dangers to which her ignorance of buſineſs expoſed her, and annotated upon the cheats, double dealings, and tricks of ſtock-jobbing, to which he aſſured her Mr. Briggs owed all he was worth, till, perplexed and confounded, ſhe declared herſelf at a loſs how to proceed,

and

and earneſtly regretted that ſhe could not have his counſel upon the ſpot.

This was his aim: to draw the wiſh from her, drew all ſuſpicion of ſelfiſh views from himſelf: and he told her that he conſidered her preſent ſituation as ſo critical, the future confuſion or regularity of her money tranſactions ſeeming to depend upon it, that he would endeavour to arrange his affairs for meeting her in London.

Cecilia gave him many thanks for the kind intention, and determined to be totally guided by him in the diſpoſal and direction of her fortune.

Mean time he had now another part to act; he ſaw that with Cecilia nothing more remained to be done, and that, harbouring not a doubt of his motives, ſhe thought his deſign in her favour did her nothing but honour; but he had too much knowledge of the world to believe it would judge him in the ſame manner, and too much conſciouſneſs of duplicity to ſet its judgment at defiance. To parry, therefore, the conjectures which might follow his attending her, he had already prepared Lady Margaret to wiſh herſelf of the party: for however diſagreeable to him was her preſence and her company, he had no other means to be under the ſame roof with Cecilia.

Miſs Bennet, the wretched tool of his various ſchemes, and the mean ſycophant of his lady,

lady, had been employed by him to work upon her jealouſy, by ſecretly informing her of his intention to go to town, at the ſame time that Cecilia went thither to meet her guardians. She pretended to have learned this intelligence by accident, and to communicate it from reſpectful regard; and adviſed her to go to London herſelf at the ſame time, that ſhe might ſee into his deſigns, and be ſome check upon his pleaſure.

The encreaſing infirmities of Lady Margaret made this counſel by no means palatable: but Miſs Bennet, following the artful inſtructions which ſhe received, put in her way ſo ſtrong a motive, by aſſuring her how little her company was wiſhed, that in the madneſs of her ſpite ſhe determined upon the journey. And little heeding how ſhe tormented herſelf while ſhe had any view of tormenting Mr. Monckton, ſhe was led on by her falſe confidant to invite Cecilia to her town houſe.

Mr. Monckton, in whom, by long practice, artifice was almoſt nature, well knowing his wife's perverſeneſs, affected to look much diſconcerted at the propoſal; while Cecilia, by no means thinking it neceſſary to extend her compliance to ſuch a puniſhment, inſtantly made an apology, and declined the invitation.

Lady Margaret, little verſed in civility, and unuſed to the arts of perſuaſion, could not,

not, even for a favourite project, prevail upon herſelf to uſe entreaty, and therefore, thinking her ſcheme defeated, looked gloomily diſappointed, and ſaid nothing more.

Mr. Monckton ſaw with delight how much this difficulty inflamed her, though the moment he could ſpeak alone with Cecilia he made it his care to remove it.

He repreſented to her that, however privately ſhe might live, ſhe was too young to be in London lodgings by herſelf, and gave an hint which ſhe could not but underſtand, that in going or in ſtaying with only ſervants, ſuſpicions might ſoon be raiſed, that the plan and motive of her journey were different to thoſe given out.

She knew that he meant to inſinuate that it would be conjectured ſhe deſigned to meet Delvile, and though colouring, vext and provoked at the ſuggeſtion, the idea was ſufficient to frighten her into his plan.

In a few days, therefore, the matter was wholly arranged, Mr. Monckton, by his ſkill and addreſs, leading every one whither he pleaſed, while by the artful coolneſs of his manner, he appeared but to follow himſelf. He ſet out the day before, though earneſtly wiſhing to accompany them, but having as yet in no ſingle inſtance gone to town in the ſame carriage with Lady Margaret, he dared truſt neither the neighbourhood nor the ſervants

vants with ſo dangerous a ſubject for their comments.

Cecilia, compelled thus to travel with only her Ladyſhip and Miſs Bennet, had a journey the moſt diſagreeable: and determined, if poſſible, to ſtay in London but two days. She had already fixed upon a houſe in which ſhe could board at Bury when ſhe returned, and there ſhe meant quietly to reſide till ſhe could enter her own.

Lady Margaret herſelf, exhilarated by a notion of having outwitted her huſband, was in unuſual good ſpirits, and almoſt in good humour. The idea of thwarting his deſigns, and being in the way of his entertainment, gave to her a delight ſhe had ſeldom received from any thing; and the belief that this was effected by the ſuperiority of her cunning, doubled her contentment, and raiſed it to exultation. She owed him, indeed, much provocation and uneaſineſs, and was happy in this opportunity of paying her arrears.

Mean while that conſummate maſter in every ſpecies of hypocriſy indulged her in this notion, by the air of diſſatisfaction with which he left the houſe. It was not that ſhe meant by her preſence to obviate any impropriety: early and long acquainted with the character of Cecilia, ſhe well knew, that during her life the paſſion of her huſband

muſt

muſt be confined to his own breaſt: but conſcious of his averſion to herſelf, which ſhe reſented with the bittereſt ill-will, and knowing how little, at any time, he deſired her company, ſhe conſoled herſelf for her inability to give pleaſure by the power ſhe poſſeſſed of giving pain, and bore with the fatigue of a journey diſagreeable and inconvenient to her, with no other view than the hope of breaking into his plan of avoiding her. Little imagining that the whole time ſhe was forwarding his favourite purſuit, and only acting the part which he had appointed her to perform.

CHAP. VIII.

A SURPRIZE.

LADY Margaret's town houſe was in Soho-ſquare; and ſcarcely had Cecilia entered it, before her deſire to ſpeed her departure, made her ſend a note to each of her guardians, acquainting them of her arrival, and begging, if poſſible, to ſee them the next day.

She had ſoon the two following anſwers:

To

To Miſs Cecilia Beverley.

Theſe.

November 8, 1779.

Miſs,

Received your's of the ſame date; can't come to-morrow. Will, Wedneſday the 10th.

Am, &c.

Jn°. Briggs.

Miſs Cecilia Beverley.

To Miſs Beverley.

Mr. Delvile has too many affairs of importance upon his hands, to make any appointment till he has deliberated how to arrange them. Mr. Delvile will acquaint Miſs Beverley when it ſhall be in his power to ſee her.

St. James's-ſquare, Nov. 8.

Theſe characteriſtic letters, which at another time might have diverted Cecilia, now merely ſerved to torment her. She was eager to quit town, ſhe was more eager to have her meeting with Mr. Delvile over, who, oppreſſive to her even when he meant to be kind, ſhe foreſaw, now he was in wrath, would be imperious even to rudeneſs. Deſirous, however, to make one interview ſuffice for both, and to ſettle whatever buſineſs might

might remain unfiniſhed by letters, ſhe again wrote to Mr. Briggs, whom ſhe had not ſpirits to encounter without abſolute neceſſity, and informing him of Mr. Delvile's delay, begged he would not trouble himſelf to call till he heard from her again.

Two days paſſed without any meſſage from them; they were ſpent chiefly alone, and very uncomfortably; Mr. Monckton being content to ſee little of her, while he knew ſhe ſaw nothing of any body elſe. On the third morning, weary of her own thoughts, weary of Lady Margaret's ill-humoured looks, and ſtill more weary of Miſs Bennet's paraſitical converſation, ſhe determined, for a little relief to the heavineſs of her mind, to go to her bookſeller, and look over and order into the country ſuch new publications as ſeemed to promiſe her any pleaſure.

She ſent, therefore, for a chair, and glad to have deviſed for herſelf any amuſement, ſet out in it immediately.

Upon entering the ſhop, ſhe ſaw the bookſeller engaged in cloſe conference with a man meanly dreſſed, and much muffled up, who ſeemed talking to him with uncommon earneſtneſs, and juſt as ſhe was approaching, ſaid, "To terms I am indifferent, for writing is no labour to me; on the contrary, it is the firſt delight of my life, and therefore, and not for dirty pelf, I wiſh to make it my profeſſion."

The

The ſpeech ſtruck Cecilia, but the voice ſtruck her more, it was Belfield's! and her amazement was ſo great, that ſhe ſtopt ſhort to look at him, without heeding a man who attended her, and deſired to know her commands.

The Bookſeller now perceiving her, came forward, and Belfield, turning to ſee who interrupted them, ſtarted as if a ſpectre had croſſed his eyes, flapped his hat over his face, and haſtily went out of the ſhop.

Cecilia checking her inclination to ſpeak to him, from obſerving his eagerneſs to eſcape her, ſoon recollected her own errand, and employed herſelf in looking over new books.

Her ſurprize, however, at a change ſo ſudden in the condition of this young man, and at a declaration of a paſſion for writing, ſo oppoſite to all the ſentiments which he had profeſſed at their late meeting in the cottage, awakened in her a ſtrong curioſity to be informed of his ſituation; and after putting aſide ſome books which ſhe deſired to have packed up for her, ſhe aſked if the gentleman who had juſt left the ſhop, and who ſhe found by what he had ſaid, was an Author, had written any thing that was publiſhed with his name?

"No, ma'am," anſwered the Bookſeller, "nothing of any conſequence; he is known, however, to have written ſeveral things that have appeared as anonymous; and I fancy,

now, ſoon, we ſhall ſee ſomething conſider-able from him."

"He is about ſome great work, then?"

"Why no, not exactly that, perhaps, at preſent; we muſt feel our way with ſome little ſmart *jeu d'eſprit* before we undertake a great work. But he is a very great genius, and I doubt not will produce ſomething extraordinary."

"Whatever he produces," ſaid Cecilia, "as I have now chanced to ſee him, I ſhall be glad you will, at any time, ſend to me."

"Certainly, ma'am; but it muſt be among other things, for he does not chooſe, juſt now, to be known: and it is a rule in our buſineſs never to tell people's names when they deſire to be ſecret. He is a little out of caſh juſt now, as you may ſuppoſe by his appearance; ſo inſtead of buying books, he comes to ſell them. However, he has taken a very good road to bring himſelf home again, for we pay very handſomely for things of any merit, eſpecially if they deal ſmartly in a few touches of the times."

Cecilia choſe not to riſk any further queſtions, leſt her knowledge of him ſhould be ſuſpected, but got into her chair, and returned to Lady Margaret's.

The ſight of Belfield reminded her not only of himſelf; the gentle Henrietta again took her place in her memory, whence her various diſtreſſes and ſuſpences had of late driven

driven from it every body but Delvile, and thoſe whom Delvile brought into it. But her regard for that amiable girl, though ſunk in the buſy ſcenes of her calamitous uncertainties, was only ſunk in her own boſom, and ready, upon their removal, to revive with freſh vigour. She was now indeed more unhappy than even in the period of her forgetfulneſs, yet her mind was no longer filled with the reſtleſs turbulence of hope, which ſtill more than deſpondency unfitted it for thinking of others.

This remembrance thus awakened, awakened alſo a deſire of renewing the connection ſo long neglected. All ſcruples concerning Delvile had now loſt their foundation, ſince the doubts from which they aroſe were both explained and removed; ſhe was certain alike of his indifference to Henrietta, and his ſeparation from herſelf; ſhe knew that nothing was to be feared from painful or offenſive rivalry, and ſhe reſolved, therefore, to loſe no time in ſeeking the firſt pleaſure to which ſince her diſappointment ſhe had voluntarily looked forward.

Early in the evening, ſhe told Lady Margaret ſhe was going out for an hour or two, and ſending again for a chair, was carried to Portland-ſtreet.

She enquired for Miſs Belfield, and was ſhewn into a parlour, where ſhe found her

drinking tea with her mother, and Mr. Hobſon, their landlord.

Henrietta almoſt ſcreamed at her ſight, from a ſudden impulſe of joy and ſurpriſe, and, running up to her, flung her arms round her neck, and embraced her with the moſt rapturous emotion: but then, drawing back with a look of timidity and ſhame, ſhe baſhfully apologized for her freedom, ſaying, "Indeed, deareſt Miſs Beverley, it is no want of reſpect, but I am ſo very glad to ſee you it makes me quite forget myſelf!"

Cecilia, charmed at a reception ſo ingenuouſly affectionate, ſoon ſatisfied her doubting diffidence by the warmeſt thanks that ſhe had preſerved ſo much regard for her, and by doubling the kindneſs with which ſhe returned her careſſes.

"Mercy on me, madam," cried Mrs. Belfield, who during this time had been buſily employed in ſweeping the hearth, wiping ſome ſlops upon the table, and ſmoothing her handkerchief and apron, "why the girl's enough to ſmother you. Henny, how can you be ſo troubleſome? I never ſaw you behave in this way before."

"Miſs Beverley, madam," ſaid Henrietta, again retreating, "is ſo kind as to pardon me, and I was ſo much ſurpriſed at ſeeing her, that I hardly knew what I was about."

"The young ladies, ma'am," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "have a mighty way of ſaluting one

another till ſuch time as they get huſbands: and then I'll warrant you they can meet without any ſalutation at all. That's my remark, at leaſt, and what I've ſeen of the world has ſet me upon making it."

This ſpeech led Cecilia to check, however artleſs, the tenderneſs of her fervent young friend, whom ſhe was much teazed by meeting in ſuch company, but who ſeemed not to dare underſtand the frequent looks which ſhe gave her expreſſive of a wiſh to be alone with her.

"Come, ladies," continued the facetious Mr. Hobſon, "what if we were all to ſit down and have a good diſh of tea? and ſuppoſe, Mrs. Belfield, you was to order us a freſh round of toaſt and butter? do you think the young ladies here would have any objection? and what if we were to have a little more water in the tea-kettle? not forgetting a little more tea in the tea-pot. What I ſay is this, let us all be comfortable; that's my notion of things."

"And a very good notion too," ſaid Mrs. Belfield, "for you have nothing to vex you. Ah, ma'am, you have heard, I ſuppoſe, about my ſon? gone off! nobody knows where! left that lord's houſe where he might have lived like a king, and gone out into the wide world nobody knows for what!"

"Indeed?" ſaid Cecilia, who, from ſeeing him in London, concluded he was again

with his family, "and has he not acquainted you where he is?"

"No, ma'am, no," cried Mrs. Belfield, "he's never once told me where he is gone nor let me know the leaſt about the matter, for if I did I would not taſte a diſh of tea again for a twelvemonth till I ſaw him get back again to that lord's! and I believe in my heart there's never ſuch another in the three kingdoms, for he has ſent here after him I dare ſay a ſcore of times. And no wonder, for I will take upon me to ſay he won't find his fellow in a hurry, Lord as he is."

"As to his being a Lord," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "I am one of them that lay no great ſtreſs upon that, unleſs he has got a good long purſe of his own, and then, to be ſure, a Lord's no bad thing. But as to the matter of ſaying Lord ſuch a one, how d'ye do? and Lord ſuch a one, what do you want? and ſuch ſort of compliments, why in my mind it's a mere nothing, in compariſon of a good income. As to your ſon, ma'am, he did not go the right way to work. He ſhould have begun with buſineſs, and gone into pleaſure afterwards: and if he had but done that, I'll be bold to ſay we might have had him at this very minute drinking tea with us over this fire-ſide."

"My ſon, Sir," ſaid Mrs. Belfield, rather angrily, "was another ſort of a perſon than

perſon of buſineſs; he always deſpiſed it from a child, and come of it what may, I am ſure he was born to be a gentleman."

"As to his deſpiſing buſineſs," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, very contemptuouſly, "why ſo much the worſe, for buſineſs is no ſuch deſpiſeable thing. And if he had been brought up behind a counter, inſtead of dangling after theſe ſame Lords, why he might have had a houſe of his own over his head, and been as good a man as myſelf."

"A houſe over his head?" ſaid Mrs. Belfield, "why he might have had what he would, and have done what he would, if he had but followed my advice, and put himſelf a little forward. I have told him a hundred times to aſk ſome of thoſe great people he lived amongſt for a place at court, for I know they've ſo many they hardly know what to do with them, and it was always my deſign from the beginning that he ſhould be ſomething of a great man; but I never could perſuade him, though, for any thing I know, as I have often told him, if he had but had a little courage he might have been an Ambaſſador by this time. And now, all of a ſudden, to be gone nobody knows where!"—

"I am ſorry, indeed," ſaid Cecilia, who knew not whether moſt to pity or wonder at her blind folly; "but I doubt not you will hear of him ſoon."

"As to being an Ambaſſador, ma'am," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "it's talking quite out of character. Thoſe ſort of great people keep things of that kind for their own poor relations and couſins. What I ſay is this; a man's beſt way is to take care of himſelf. The more thoſe great people ſee you want them, the leſs they like your company. Let every man be brought up to buſineſs, and then when he's made his fortune, he may walk with his hat on. Why now there was your friend, ma'am," turning to Cecilia, "that ſhot out his brains without paying any body a ſouſe; pray how was that being more genteel than ſtanding behind a counter, and not owing a ſhilling?"

"Do you think a young lady," cried Mrs. Belfield warmly, "can bear to hear of ſuch a thing as ſtanding behind a counter? I am ſure if my ſon had ever done it, I ſhould not expect any lady would ſo much as look at him. And yet, though I ſay it, ſhe might look a good while, and not ſee many ſuch perſons, let her look where ſhe pleaſed. And then he has ſuch a winning manner into the bargain, that I believe in my heart there's never a lady in the land could ſay no to him. And yet he has ſuch a prodigious ſhyneſs, I never could make him own he had ſo much as aſked the queſtion. And what lady can begin firſt?"

"Why no," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "that would be out of character another way. Now my notion is this; let every man be agreeable! and

and then he may aſk what lady he pleaſes—And when he's a mind of a lady, he ſhould look upon a frown or two as nothing; for the ladies frown in courtſhip as a thing of courſe; it's juſt like a man's ſwearing at a coachman; why he's not a bit more in a paſſion, only he thinks he ſha'n't be minded without it."

"Well, for my part," ſaid Mrs. Belfield, "I am ſure if I was a young lady, and moſt eſpecially if I was a young lady of fortune, and all that, I ſhould like a modeſt young gentleman, ſuch as my ſon, for example, better by half than a bold ſwearing young fellow, that would make a point to have me whether I would or no."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Mr. Hobſon; "but the young ladies are not of that way of thinking; they are all for a little life and ſpirit. Don't I ſay right, young ladies?"

Cecilia, who could not but perceive that theſe ſpeeches was levelled at herſelf, felt offended and tired; and finding ſhe had no chance of any private converſation with Henrietta, aroſe to take leave: but while ſhe ſtopped her in the paſſage to enquire when ſhe could ſee her alone, a footman knocked at the door, who, having aſked if Mr. Belfield lodged there, and been anſwered in the affirmative, begged to know whether Miſs Beverley was then in the houſe?

Cecilia, much ſurpriſed, went forward, and told him who ſhe was.

"I have been, madam," ſaid he, "with a meſſage to you at Mr. Monckton's, in Soho-Square: but nobody knew where you was; and Mr. Monckton came out and ſpoke to me himſelf, and ſaid that all he could ſuppoſe was that you might be at this houſe. So he directed me to come here."

"And from whom, Sir, is your meſſage?"

"From the honourable Mr. Delvile, madam, in St. James's-Square. He deſires to know if you ſhall be at home on Saturday morning, the day after to-morrow, and whether you can appoint Mr. Briggs to meet him by twelve o'clock exactly, as he ſha'n't be able to ſtay above three minutes."

Cecilia gave an anſwer as cold as the meſſage; that ſhe would be in Soho-Square at the time he mentioned, and acquaint Mr. Briggs of his intention.

The footman then went away; and Henrietta told her, that if ſhe could call ſome morning ſhe might perhaps contrive to be alone with her, and added, "indeed I wiſh much to ſee you, if you could poſſibly do me ſo great an honour; for I am very miſerable, and have nobody to tell ſo! Ah, Miſs Beverley! you that have ſo many friends, and that deſerve as many again, you little know what a hard thing it is to have none!—but my brother's ſtrange diſappearing has half broke our hearts!"

Cecilia

Cecilia was beginning a conſolatory ſpeech, in which ſhe meant to give her private aſſurances of his health and ſafety, when ſhe was interrupted by Mr. Albany, who came ſuddenly into the paſſage.

Henrietta received him with a look of pleaſure, and enquired why he had ſo long been abſent; but, ſurpriſed by the ſight of Cecilia, he exclaimed, without anſwering her, "why didſt thou fail me? why appoint me to a place thou wert quitting thyſelf?—thou thing of fair profeſſions! thou inveigler of eſteem! thou vain, deluſive promiſer of pleaſure!"

"You condemn me too haſtily," ſaid Cecilia; "if I failed in my promiſe, it was not owing to caprice or inſincerity, but to a real and bitter misfortune which incapacitated me from keeping it. I ſhall ſoon, however,—nay, I am already at your diſpoſal, if you have any commands for me."

"I have always," anſwered he, "commands for the rich, for I have always compaſſion for the poor."

"Come to me, then, at Mr. Monckton's in Soho-Square," cried ſhe, and haſtened into her chair, impatient to end a conference which ſhe ſaw excited the wonder of the ſervants, and which alſo now drew out from the parlour Mr. Hobſon and Mrs. Belfield. She then kiſſed her hand to Henrietta, and ordered the chairmen to carry her home.

It had not been without difficulty that ſhe had reſtrained herſelf from mentioning what ſhe knew of Belfield, when ſhe found his mother and ſiſter in a ſtate of ſuch painful uncertainty concerning him. But her utter ignorance of his plans, joined to her undoubted knowledge of his wiſh of concealment, made her fear doing miſchief by officiouſneſs, and think it wiſer not to betray what ſhe had ſeen of him, till better informed of his own views and intentions. Yet, willing to ſhorten a ſuſpence ſo uneaſy to them, ſhe determined to entreat Mr. Monckton would endeavour to find him out, and acquaint him with their anxiety.

That gentleman, when ſhe returned to his houſe, was in a ſtate of mind by no means enviable. Miſſing her at tea, he had aſked Miſs Bennet where ſhe was, and hearing ſhe had not left word, he could ſcarce conceal his chagrin. Knowing, however, how few were her acquaintances in town, he ſoon concluded ſhe was with Miſs Belfield, but, not ſatisfied with ſending Mr. Delvile's meſſenger after her, he privately employed one in whom he truſted for himſelf, to make enquiries at the houſe without ſaying whence he came.

But though this man was returned, and he knew her ſafety, he ſtill felt alarmed; he had flattered himſelf, from the length of time

time in which ſhe had now done nothing without conſulting him, ſhe would ſcarce even think of any action without his previous concurrence. And he had hoped, by a little longer uſe, to make his counſel become neceſſary, which he knew to be a very ſhort ſtep from rendering it abſolute.

Nor was he well pleaſed to perceive, by this voluntary excurſion, a ſtruggle to caſt off her ſadneſs, and a wiſh to procure herſelf entertainment: it was not that he deſired her miſery, but he was earneſt that all relief from it ſhould ſpring from himſelf: and though far from diſpleaſed that Delvile ſhould loſe his ſovereignty over her thoughts, he was yet of opinion that, till his own liberty was reſtored, he had leſs to apprehend from grief indulged, than grief allayed; one could but lead her to repining retirement, the other might guide her to a conſolatory rival.

He well knew, however, it was as eſſential to his cauſe to diſguiſe his diſappointments as his expectations, and, certain that by pleaſing alone he had any chance of acquiring power, he cleared up when Cecilia returned, who as unconſcious of feeling, as of owing any ſubjection to him, preſerved uncontrolled the right of acting for herſelf, however deſirous and glad of occaſional inſtruction.

She told him where ſhe had been, and related her meeting Belfield, and the unhappineſs of his friends, and hinted her wiſh that he could be informed what they ſuffered. Mr. Monckton, eager to oblige her, went inſtantly in ſearch of him, and returning to ſupper, told her he had traced him through the bookſeller, who had not the dexterity to parry his artful enquiries, and had actually appointed him to breakfaſt in Soho-Square the next morning.

He had found him, he ſaid, writing, but in high ſpirits and good humour. He had reſiſted, for a while, his invitation on account of his dreſs, all his clothes but the very coat which he had on being packed up and at his mother's: but, when laughed at by Mr. Monckton for ſtill retaining ſome foppery, he gaily proteſted what remained of it ſhould be extinguiſhed; and acknowledging that his ſhame was no part of his philoſophy, declared he would throw it wholly aſide, and in ſpight of his degradation, renew his viſits at his houſe.

"I would not tell him," Mr. Monckton continued, "of the anxiety of his family; I thought it would come more powerfully from yourſelf, who, having ſeen, can better enforce it."

Cecilia was very thankful for this compliance with her requeſt, and anticipated the pleaſure ſhe hoped ſoon to give Henrietta by

by the reſtoration of a brother ſo much loved and ſo regretted.

She ſent, mean time, to Mr. Briggs the meſſage ſhe had received from Mr. Delvile, and had the ſatisfaction of an anſwer that he would obſerve the appointment.

CHAP. IX.

A Confabulation.

THE next morning, while the family were at breakfaſt, Belfield, according to his promiſe, made his viſit.

A high colour overſpread his face as he entered the room, reſulting from a ſenſation of grief at his fallen fortune, and ſhame at his altered appearance, which though he endeavoured to cover under an air of gaiety and unconcern, gave an awkwardneſs to his manners, and a viſible diſtreſs to his countenance: Mr. Monckton received him with pleaſure, and Cecilia, who ſaw the conflict of his philoſophy with his pride, dreſſed her features once more in ſmiles, which, however faint and heartleſs, ſhewed her deſire to re-aſſure him. Miſs Bennet, as uſual when not called upon by the maſter

or

or Lady of the houſe, ſat as a cypher; and Lady Margaret, always diſagreeable and repulſive to the friends of her huſband, though ſhe was not now more than commonly ungracious, ſtruck the quick-feeling and irritable Belfield, to wear an air of rude ſuperiority meant to reproach him with his diſgrace.

This notion, which ſtrongly affected him, made him, for one inſtant, heſitate whether he ſhould remain another in the ſame room with her: but the friendlineſs of Mr. Monckton, and the gentleneſs and good-breeding of Cecilia, ſeemed ſo ſtudious to make amends for her moroſeneſs, that he checked his too ready indignation, and took his ſeat at the table. Yet was it ſome time before he could recover even the aſſumed vivacity which this ſuſpected inſult had robbed him of, ſufficiently to enter into converſation with any appearance of eaſe or pleaſure. But, after a while, ſoothed by the attentions of Cecilia and Mr. Monckton, his uneaſineſs wore off, and the native ſpirit and livelineſs of his character broke forth with their accuſtomed energy.

"This good company, I hope," ſaid he, addreſſing himſelf, however, only to Cecilia, "will not ſo much *miſtake the thing* as to criticiſe my dreſs of this morning; ſince it is perfectly according to rule, and to rule eſtabliſhed from time immemorial: but

but leſt any of you ſhould ſo much err as to fancy ſhabby what is only characteriſtic, I muſt endeavour to be beforehand with the malice of conjecture, and have the honour to inform you, that I am enliſted in the Grub-ſtreet regiment, of the third ſtory, and under the tattered banner of ſcribbling volunteers! a race which, if it boaſts not the courage of heroes, at leaſt equals them in enmity. This coat, therefore, is merely the uniform of my corps, and you will all, I hope, reſpect it as emblematical of wit and erudition."

"We muſt at leaſt reſpect you," ſaid Cecilia, "who thus gaily can ſport with it."

"Ah, Madam!" ſaid he, more ſeriouſly, "it is not from you I ought to look for reſpect! I muſt appear to you the moſt unſteady and coward-hearted of beings. But lately I bluſhed to ſee you from poverty, though more worthily employed than when I had been ſeen by you in affluence; that ſhame vanquiſhed, another equally narrow took its place, and yeſterday I bluſhed again that you detected me in a new purſuit, though I had only quitted my former one from a conviction it was ill choſen. There ſeems in human nature a worthleſſneſs not to be conquered! yet I will ſtruggle with it to the laſt, and either die in the attempt, or dare ſeem that which I am, without adding to the miſeries of life the

the ſting, the envenomed ſting, of daſtardly falſe ſhame!"

"Your language is wonderfully altered within this twelvemonth," ſaid Mr. Monckton; "the *worthleſſneſs of human nature!* the *miſeries of life!* this from you! ſo lately the champion of human nature, and the panegyriſt of human life!"

"Soured by perſonal diſappointment," anſwered he, "I may perhaps ſpeak with too much acrimony; yet, ultimately, my opinions have not much changed. Happineſs is given to us with more liberality than we are willing to confeſs; it is judgment only that is dealt us ſparingly, and of that we have ſo little, that when felicity is before us, we turn to the right or left, or when at the right or left, we proceed ſtrait forward. It has been ſo with me; I have ſought it at a diſtance, amidſt difficulty and danger, when all that I could wiſh has been immediately within my graſp."

"It muſt be owned," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "after what you have ſuffered from this world you were wont to defend, there is little reaſon to wonder at ſome change in your opinion."

"Yet whatever have been my ſufferings," he anſwered, "I have generally been involved in them by my own raſhneſs or caprice. My laſt enterpriſe eſpecially, from which my expectations were higheſt, was the moſt ill judged of any. I conſidered not how little my way

way of life had fitted me for the experiment I was making, how irreparably I was enervated by long ſedentary habits, and how inſufficient for bodily ſtrength was mental reſolution. We may fight againſt partial prejudices, and by ſpirit and fortitude we may overcome them; but it will not do to war with the general tenor of education. We may blame, deſpiſe, regret as we pleaſe, but cuſtoms long eſtabliſhed, and habits long indulged, aſſume an empire deſpotic, though their power is but preſcriptive. Oppoſing them is vain; Nature herſelf, when forced aſide, is not more elaſtic in her rebound."

"Will you not then," ſaid Cecilia, "ſince your experiment has failed, return again to your family, and to the plan of life you formerly ſettled?"

"You ſpeak of them together," ſaid he, with a ſmile, "as if you thought them inſeparable; and indeed my own apprehenſion they would be deemed ſo, has made me thus fear to ſee my friends, ſince I love not reſiſtance, yet cannot again attempt the plan of life they would have me purſue. I have given up my cottage, but my independence is as dear to me as ever; and all that I have gathered from experience, is to maintain it by thoſe employments for which my education has fitted me, inſtead of ſeeking it injudiciouſly by the very road for which it has unqualified me."

"And

"And what is this independence," cried Mr. Monckton, "which has thus bewitched your imagination? a mere idle dream of romance and enthuſiaſm; without exiſtence in nature, without poſſibility in life. In unciviliſed countries, or in lawleſs times, independence, for a while, may perhaps ſtalk abroad: but in a regular government, 'tis only the viſion of a heated brain; one part of a community muſt inevitably hang upon another, and 'tis a farce to call either independent, when to break the chain by which they are linked would prove deſtruction to both. The ſoldier wants not the officer more than the officer the ſoldier; nor the tenant the landlord, more than the landlord the tenant. The rich owe their diſtinction, their luxuries, to the poor, as much as the poor owe their rewards, their neceſſaries, to the rich."

"Man treated as an automaton," anſwered Belfield, "and conſidered merely with reſpect to his bodily operations, may indeed be called dependent, ſince the food by which he lives, or, rather, without which he dies, cannot wholly be cultivated and prepared by his own hands: but conſidered in a nobler ſenſe, he deſerves not the degrading epithet; ſpeak of him, then, as a being of feeling and underſtanding, with pride to alarm, with nerves to tremble, with honour to ſatisfy, and with a ſoul to be immortal!—as ſuch, may he not claim the freedom of his own thoughts? may not

not that claim be extended to the liberty of ſpeaking, and the power of being governed by them? and when thoughts, words, and actions are exempt from control, will you brand him with dependency merely becauſe the grazier feeds his meat, and the baker kneads his bread?"

"But who is there in the whole world," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "extenſive as it is, and diſſimilar as are its inhabitants, that can pretend to aſſert, his thoughts, words, and actions are exempt from control? even where intereſt, which you ſo much diſdain, interferes not,—though where that is I confeſs I cannot tell!—are we not kept ſilent where we wiſh to reprove by the fear of offending? and made ſpeak where wiſh to be ſilent by the deſire of obliging? do we not bow to the ſcoundrel as low as to the man of honour? are we not by mere forms kept ſtanding when tired? made give place to thoſe we deſpiſe? and ſmiles to thoſe we hate? or if we refuſe theſe attentions, are we not regarded as ſavages, and ſhut out of ſociety?"

"All theſe," anſwered Belfield, "are ſo merely matters of ceremony, that the conceſſion can neither coſt pain to the proud, nor give pleaſure to the vain. The bow is to the coat, the attention is to the rank, and the fear of offending ought to extend to all mankind. Homage ſuch as this infringes not our ſincerity, ſince it is as much a matter of courſe as

as the dreſs that we wear, and has as little reaſon to flatter a man as the ſhadow which follows him. I no more, therefore, hold him deceitful for not oppoſing this pantomimical parade, than I hold him to be dependent for eating corn he has not ſown."

"Where, then, do you draw the line? and what is the boundary beyond which your independence muſt not ſtep?"

"I hold that man," cried he, with energy, "to be independent, who treats the Great as the Little, and the Little as the Great, who neither exults in riches nor bluſhes in poverty, who owes no man a groat, and who ſpends not a ſhilling he has not earned."

"You will not, indeed, then, have a very numerous acquaintance, if this is the deſcription of thoſe with whom you purpoſe to aſſociate! but is it poſſible you imagine you can live by ſuch notions? why the Carthuſian in his monaſtery, who is at leaſt removed from temptation, is not mortified ſo ſeverely as a man of ſpirit living in the world, who would preſcribe himſelf ſuch rules."

"Not merely have I preſcribed," returned Belfield, "I have already put them in practice; and far from finding any penance, I never before found happineſs. I have now adopted, though poor, the very plan of life I ſhould have elected if rich; my pleaſure, therefore, is become my buſineſs, and my buſineſs my pleaſure."

"And

"And is this plan," cried Monckton, "nothing more than turning knight-errant to the bookſellers?"

"'Tis a knight-errantry," anſwered Belfield laughing, "which, however ludicrous it may ſeem to you, requires more ſoul and more brains than any other. Our giants may, indeed, be only wind-mills, but they muſt be attacked with as much ſpirit, and conquered with as much bravery, as any fort or any town, in time of war ſhould be demoliſhed; and though the ſiege, I muſt confeſs, may be of leſs national utility, the aſſailants of the quill have their honour as much at heart as the aſſailants of the ſword."

"I ſuppoſe, then," ſaid Monckton, archly, "if a man wants a biting lampoon, or an handſome panegyric, ſome news-paper ſcandal, or a ſonnet for a lady—"

"No, no," interrupted Belfield eagerly, "if you imagine me a hireling ſcribbler for the purpoſes of defamation or of flattery, you as little know my ſituation as my character. My ſubjects ſhall be my own, and my ſatire ſhall be general. I would as much diſdain to be perſonal with an anonymous pen, as to attack an unarmed man in the dark with a dagger I had kept concealed."

A reply of rallying incredulity was riſing to the lips of Mr. Monckton, when reading in the looks of Cecilia an entire approbation of this ſentiment, he checked his deſire of ridicule,

dicule, and exclaimed, "ſpoken like a ma of honour, and one whoſe works may prof the world!"

"From my earlieſt youth to the preſen hour," continued Belfield, "literature ha been the favourite object of my purſuit, m recreation in leiſure, and my hope in employ ment. My propenſity to it, indeed, ha been ſo ungovernable, that I may properl call it the ſource of my ſeveral miſcarriage throughout life. It was the bar to my pre ferment, for it gave me a diſtaſte to othe ſtudies; it was the cauſe of my unſteadineſ in all my undertakings, becauſe to all I pre ferred it. It has ſunk me to diſtreſs, it ha involved me in difficulties; it has brough me to the brink of ruin by making me neglect the means of living, yet never, till now, di I diſcern it might itſelf be my ſupport."

"I am heartily glad, Sir," ſaid Cecilia "your various enterprizes and ſtruggles hav at length ended in a project which promiſe you ſo much ſatisfaction. But you will ſurel ſuffer your ſiſter and your mother to partak of it? for who is there that your proſperity will make ſo happy?"

"You do them infinite honour, madam by taking any intereſt in their affairs; bu to own to you the truth, what to me appear proſperity, will to them wear another aſpect They have looked forward to my elevatio with expectations the moſt improbable, an

though

thought every thing within my graſp, with a ſimplicity incredible. But though their hopes were abſurd, I am pained by their diſappointment, and I have not courage to meet their tears, which I am ſure will not be ſpared when they ſee me."

"'Tis from tenderneſs, then," ſaid Cecilia, half ſmiling, "that you are cruel; and from affection to your friends that you make them believe you have forgotten them?"

There was a delicacy in this reproach exactly ſuited to work upon Belfield, who feeling it with quickneſs, ſtarted up, and cried, "I believe I am wrong!—I will go to them this moment!"

Cecilia felt eager to ſecond the generous impulſe; but Mr. Monckton, laughing at his impetuoſity, inſiſted he ſhould firſt finiſh his breakfaſt.

"Your friends," ſaid Cecilia, "can have no mortification ſo hard to bear as your voluntary abſence; and if they ſee but that you are happy, they will ſoon be reconciled to whatever ſituation you may chooſe."

"Happy!" repeated he, with animation, "O, I am in paradiſe!" I am come from a region in the firſt rude ſtate of nature, to civilization and refinement! the life I led at the cottage was the life of a ſavage; no intercourſe with ſociety, no conſolation from books; my mind locked up, every ſource dried of intellectual delight, and no enjoyment

ment in my power but from ſleep and from food. Weary of an exiſtence which thus levelled me with a brute, I grew aſhamed of the approximation, and liſtening to the remonſtrance of my underſtanding, I gave up the precipitate plan, to purſue one more conſonant to reaſon. I came to town, hired a room, and ſent for pen, ink and paper: what I have written are trifles, but the bookſeller has not rejected them. I was ſettled, therefore, in a moment, and comparing my new occupation with that I had juſt quitted, I ſeemed exalted on the ſudden from a mere creature of inſtinct, to a rational and intelligent being. But when I firſt opened a book, after ſo long an abſtinence from all mental nouriſhment,—O, it was rapture! no half-famiſhed beggar regaled ſuddenly with food ever ſeized on his repaſt with more hungry avidity."

Let fortune turn which way it will," cried Monckton, "you may defy all its malice, while poſſeſſed of a ſpirit of enjoyment which nothing can ſubdue!"

"But were you not, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "as great an enthuſiaſt the other day for your cottage, and for labour?"

"I was, madam; but there my philoſophy was erroneous: in my ardour to fly from meanneſs and from dependence, I thought in labour and retirement I ſhould find freedom and happineſs; but I forgot that my body was

was not ſeaſoned for ſuch work, and conſidered not that a mind which had once been opened by knowledge, could ill endure the contraction of dark and perpetual ignorance. The approach, however, of winter, brought me acquainted with my miſtake. It grew cold, it grew bleak; little guarded againſt the inclemency of the weather, I felt its ſeverity in every limb, and miſſed a thouſand indulgencies which in poſſeſſion I had never valued. To riſe at break of day, chill, freezing, and comfortleſs! no ſun abroad, no fire at home! to go out in all weather to work, that work rough, coarſe, and laborious! — unuſed to ſuch hardſhips, I found I could not bear them, and, however unwillingly, was compelled to relinquiſh the attempt."

Breakfaſt now being over, he again aroſe to take leave.

"You are going, then, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "immediately to your friends?"

"No, madam," anſwered he heſitating, "not juſt this moment; to-morrow morning, perhaps,—but it is now late, and I have buſineſs for the reſt of the day."

"Ah, Mr. Monckton!" cried Cecilia, what miſchief have you done by occaſioning this delay!"

"This goodneſs, madam," ſaid Belfield, "my ſiſter can never ſufficiently acknowledge. But I will own, that though, juſt now, in a

warm moment, I felt eager to preſent myſelf to her and my mother, I rather wiſh, now I am cooler, to be ſaved the pain of telling them in perſon my ſituation. I mean, therefore, firſt to write to them."

"You will not fail, then, to ſee them to-morrow?"

"Certainly—I think not."

"Nay, but certainly you *muſt* not, for I ſhall call upon them to-day, and aſſure them they may expect you. Can I ſoften your taſk of writing by giving them any meſſage from you?"

"Ah, madam, have a care!" cried he; "this condeſcenſion to a poor author may be more dangerous than you have any ſuſpicion! and before you have power to help yourſelf, you may ſee your name prefixed to the dedication of ſome trumpery pamphlet!"

"I will run," cried ſhe, "all riſks; remember, therefore, you will be reſponſible for the performance of my promiſe."

"I will be ſure," anſwered he, "not to forget what reflects ſo much honour upon myſelf."

Cecilia was ſatisfied by this aſſent, and he then went away.

"A ſtrange flighty character!" cried Mr. Monckton, "yet of uncommon capacity, and full of genius. Were he leſs imaginative, wild and eccentric, he has abilities for any

ſtation, and might fix and diſtinguiſh himſelf almoſt wherever he pleaſed."

"I knew not," ſaid Cecilia, "the full worth of ſteadineſs and prudence till I knew this young man; for he has every thing elſe; talents the moſt ſtriking, a love of virtue the moſt elevated, and manners the moſt pleaſing; yet wanting ſteadineſs and prudence, he can neither act with conſiſtency nor proſper with continuance."

"He is well enough," ſaid Lady Margaret, who had heard the whole argument in ſullen taciturnity, "he is well enough, I ſay; and there comes no good from young women's being ſo difficult."

Cecilia, offended by a ſpeech which implied a rude deſire to diſpoſe of her, went up ſtairs to her own room; and Mr. Monckton, always enraged when young men and Cecilia were alluded to in the ſame ſentence, retired to his library.

She then ordered a chair, and went to Portland-ſtreet, to fulfil what ſhe had offered to Belfield, and to revive his mother and ſiſter by the pleaſure of the promiſed interview.

She found them together: and her intelligence being of equal conſequence to both, ſhe did not now repine at the preſence of Mrs. Belfield. She made her communication with the moſt cautious attention to their characters, ſoftening the ill ſhe had to relate with reſpect

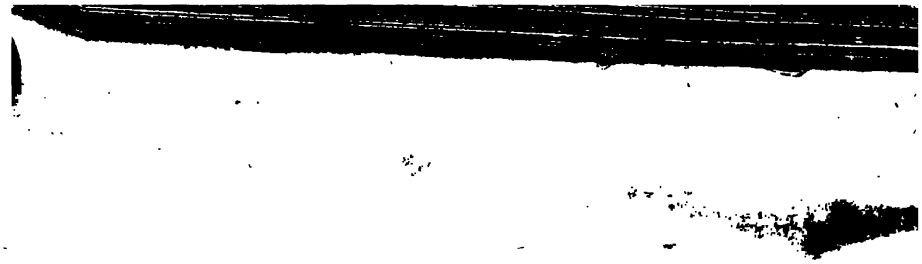
to Belfield's preſent way of living, by endeavouring to awaken affection and joy from the proſpect of the approaching meeting. She counſelled them as much as poſſible to reſtrain their chagrin at his misfortunes, which he would but conſtrue into reproach of his ill management; and ſhe repreſented that when once he was reſtored to his family, he might almoſt imperceptibly be led into ſome leſs wild and more profitable way of buſineſs.

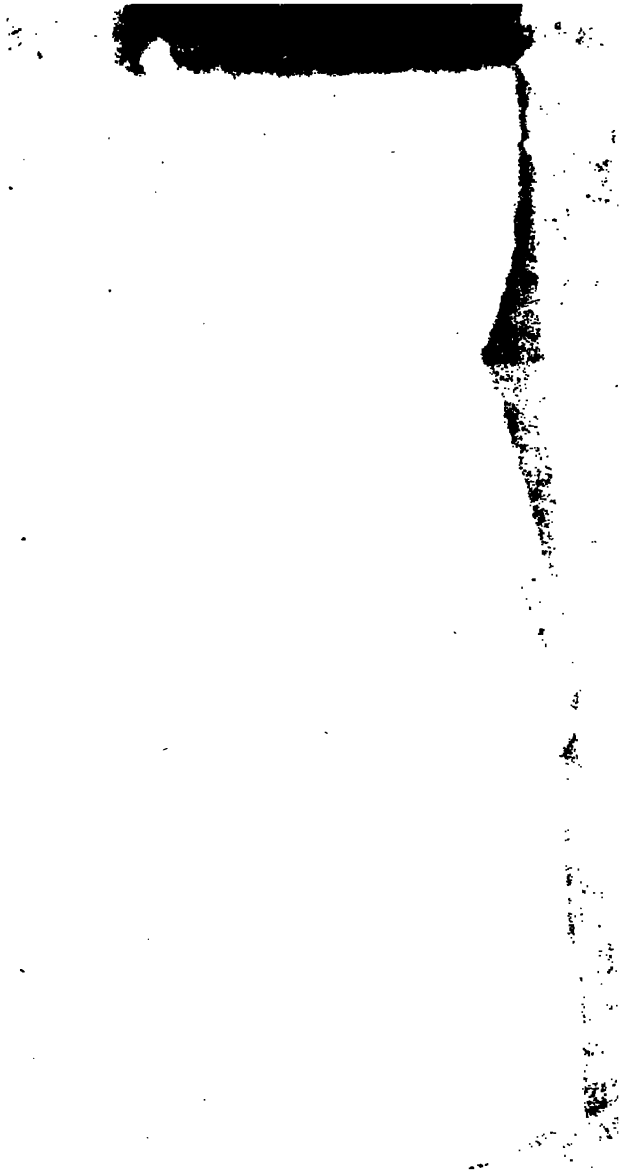
When ſhe had told all ſhe thought proper to relate, kindly interſperſing her account with the beſt advice and beſt comfort ſhe could ſuggeſt, ſhe made an end of her viſit; for the affliction of Mrs. Belfield, upon hearing the actual ſituation of her ſon, was ſo clamorous and unappeaſable, that, little wondering at Belfield's want of courage to encounter it, and having no opportunity in ſuch a ſtorm to conſole the ſoft Henrietta, whoſe tears flowed abundantly that her brother ſhould thus be fallen, ſhe only promiſed before ſhe left town to ſee her again, and beſeeching Mrs. Belfield to moderate her concern, was glad to leave the houſe where her preſence had no power to quiet their diſtreſs.

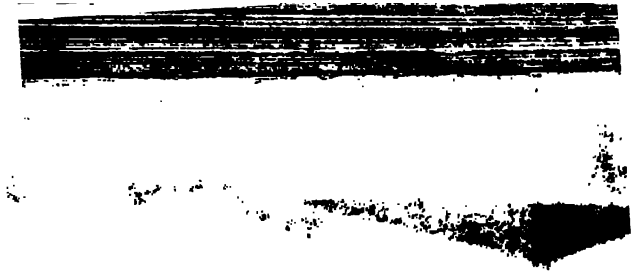
She paſſed the reſt of the day in ſad reflections upon the meeting ſhe was to have the next morning with Mr. Delvile. She wiſhed ardently to know whether his ſon was gone abroad; and whether Mrs. Delvile, whoſe health

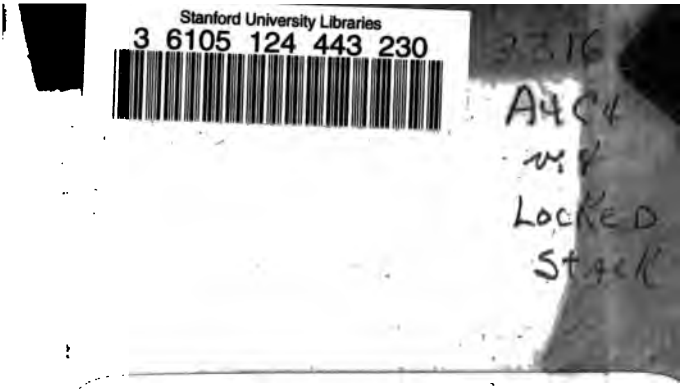
health in her own letter was mentioned in terms the moſt melancholy, was yet recovered; yet neither of theſe enquiries could ſhe even think of making, ſince reaſonably, without them, apprehenſive of ſome reproach.

END of the FOURTH VOLUME.





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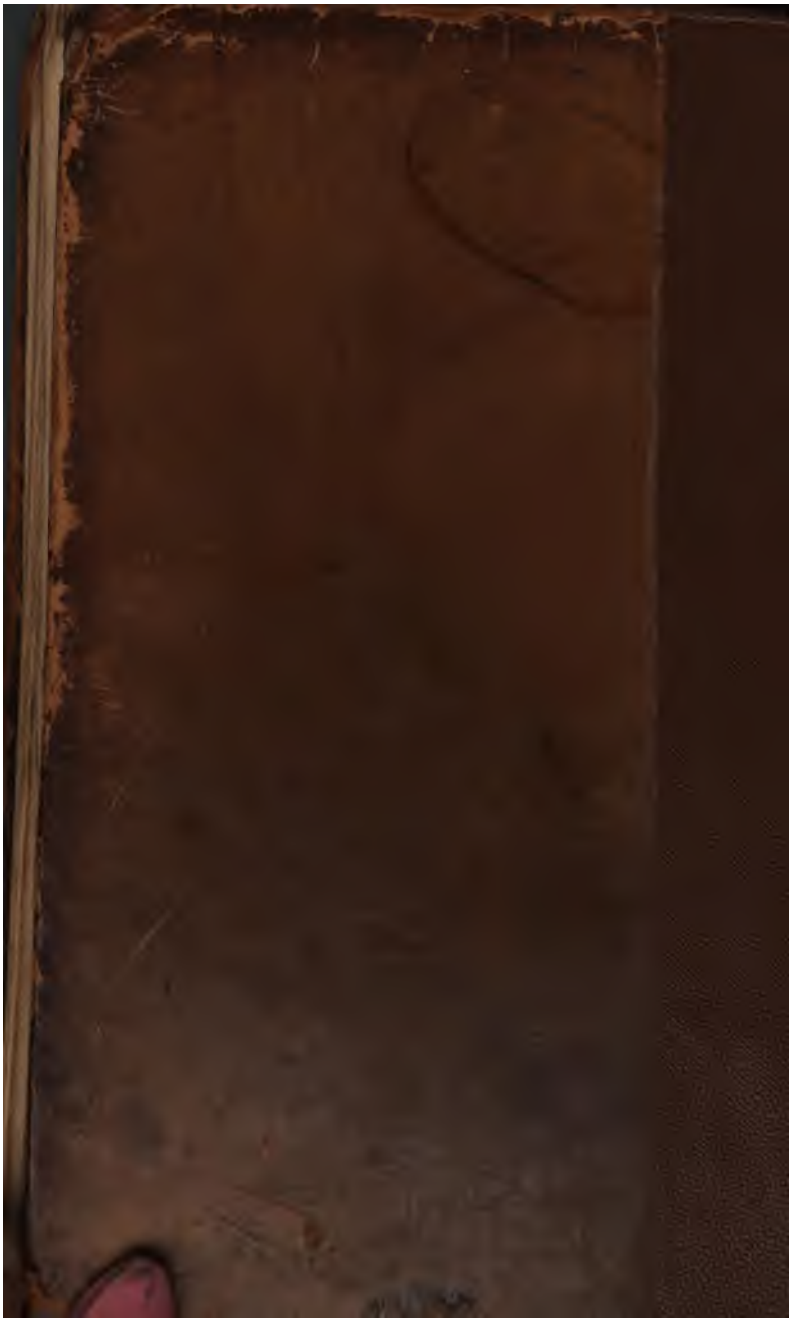
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